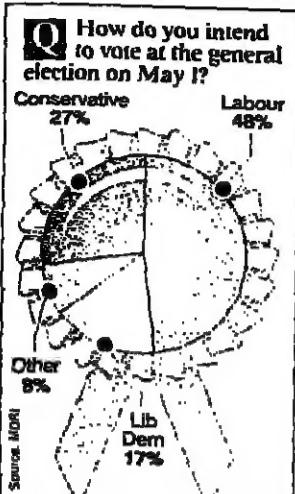


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28 PAGES OF APPOINTMENTS



Labour is still on course for victory, says MORI poll

By PETER RIDDELL

LABOUR enters the final week of the election campaign in a commanding position with no evidence of any Tory recovery, according to the latest MORI poll for *The Times*.

The poll will undermine the surge in Tory hopes yesterday that the party is at last narrowing the gap. It suggests that Labour is still on course for a clear election victory on May 1.

The MORI poll, undertaken on Tuesday, puts Labour on 48 per cent, down one point over the past week. The Tories are on 27 per cent, down five points on the week. By contrast, the Liberal Democrats have gained four points over the week to 17 per cent. Support for the Referendum Party has risen from 2 to 3 per cent over the week.

The MORI figure for the Tories could be exceptionally low. It is the lowest of the campaign, and below the party's recent range, so the Labour lead, at 21 points, may be exaggerated. But the poll as a whole confirms Labour's strong position, and is in line with all but one other recent poll. A new Gallup survey today puts Labour on 50 per cent against 30 per cent for the Tories.

Other questions asked by MORI support this conclusion. Tony Blair enjoys a big lead over John Major on who would make the most capable Prime Minister, and Labour is also well ahead of the Tories on who has the best team of leaders, the best policies for the country as a whole and who is most clear and united.

Particularly damaging for the Tories is that more than a quarter of the public believe that it is time for a change, even though they accept that "the Government has built strong foundations for Britain's economic recovery". This confirms that a crucial block of voters is prepared to disregard the strength of the economy, putting a higher priority on getting rid of the Tories. Admittedly, an unusually large number — a quarter of those questioned — say they may change their voting intentions over the next week. But more Tory than Labour supporters say they may shift.

The poll is directly contrary to an ICM poll in *The Guardian* yesterday, which showed a big rise in Tory support to 37 per cent and drop in the Labour rating to 42 per cent, which is out of line with all other recent polls.

The Tories have seized on the figures which, they say, back their own private voting intention poll which have been putting the Labour lead in single figures. Mr Major has also claimed that the evidence from Tory canvass returns points to higher Tory support than the polls which have "hailed" him.

The rise in Liberal Democrat support is also reflected in an improvement in its relative position so it is now in the lead in the main Tory/ Liberal Democrat marginal seats. The Tories, however, believe that the recent arguments over Europe may help them retain waverers in key seats in the south-west, such as the fishing ports of Cornwall.

MORI interviewed 1,133 adults at 85 sampling points across Britain on a face-to-face basis on April 22. Voting intention figures exclude those who say they would not vote (6 per cent), are undecided (9 per cent) or who refuse to name a party (4 per cent).

Lottery plan angers BMA and teachers

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

DOCTORS and teachers poured scorn on Labour's plans for a "£1 billion jackpot" of lottery money for health and education last night, claiming that the party would use the weekly draw to pay for basic services.

Tony Blair and an array of celebrities announced that the midweek Lottery fund, projected to raise £400 million profit a year, would be earmarked for health centres, homework clubs and information technology training for teachers.

"Labour can't guarantee that you'll win the lottery. But we will guarantee your money goes to causes you care about," Mr Blair said. "It is the people's lottery. It should address the people's priorities."

But the British Medical Association and the National Association of Head Teachers immediately attacked the idea and expressed fears about basic funding. Critics also said that the lottery was usually played by those on low incomes, and it was unfair that they should pay twice for public services.

"There might be an assumption that because there is a pot of gold at the end of the lottery rainbow we don't need to worry any longer about the NHS," the BMA said.

David Hart, NAHT general secretary, said that Labour was in grave danger of going down the same route as the Tories — "using lottery money increasingly to resource basic needs in schools."

He had no doubt that lottery money was being used for important initiatives. "But I remain very sceptical about the desirability of using lottery money to fund basic needs across all schools and there is no doubt that information technology is a basic need as we enter the 21st century."

The National Union of Teachers welcomed Labour's announcement of in-service IT training for teachers, but also expressed concern about it being funded from lottery cash. "Such essential provision as the training of teachers should not be dependent on unreliable sources of funding," the union said.

The Tories accused Labour of a "smash and grab" raid on lottery money to fund the "black hole" in its spending plans. Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, said: "Gordon Brown has already admitted that taxes would rise in July under a Labour government. Now we know that they would not only put up taxes — they would pinch the Lottery cash too."

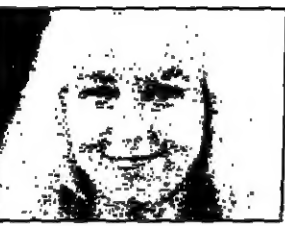
But Mr Blair defended his plan, insisting the £1 billion would come on top of government spending and arguing that the new projects would be difficult to finance under present constraints.

His aides denied that existing lottery projects would be penalised but they admitted that the midweek lottery which has boosted overall profits by 20 per cent in the past two weeks would be ringfenced.

Labour aides also admitted that the "people's lottery" could have an impact on future projects and accepted that primary legislation would be needed to amend the existing lottery laws. The current distributors would need to be consulted before legislation was finalised.

Virginia Bonomy, the National Heritage Secretary, claimed that Labour's scheme would jeopardise the success of the lottery, increasing bureaucracy and threatening the concept that lottery money should not be used for government projects.

She also insisted that £1 billion would have to be reallocated from existing projects, so community sports clubs, charities and arts could lose out.



Lisa Lovebucket and the elusive Labour candidate

— Matthew Parris, page 13

Reports, analysis 9-15

William Rees-Mogg 22

Leading article 23



Jemima Khan with son Sulaiman canvassing for the Referendum Party yesterday

Jemima rejoins election trail

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

LAST time Jemima Khan, née Goldsmith, tried to rouse women voters it was in Urdu. She might as well have spoken that yesterday.

"Why did you choose us?" Sarah Hobhouse, the headmistress, said as she showed away elegant, pencil-slim Jemima from Coombe Hill infants' school, Kingston upon Thames, as she tied to mingle with mothers. "We are doing other schools as well," Jemima assured her. "Good," snapped Mrs Hobhouse, retreating across the playground.

Jemima, daughter of Sir James, fought her first election campaign this year in Pakistan where husband Imran Khan's Movement for Justice won none of the national assembly's 217 seats. A similar result is predicted for her father's Referendum Party next Thursday. Yesterday she hauled her five-month-old son Sulaiman around as she continued the struggle to create a political dynasty for him to inherit — somewhere.

She had started the week by getting out and about among the council tenants of Putney, where Sir James seeks to end David Mellor's 7,500 Tory majority — the former "Minister for Fun" having challenged her to do just that.

Ferry lines win order to halt Calais blockade

By HARVEY ELLIOTT TRAVEL CORRESPONDENT SUSAN BELL IN CALAIS AND JOANNA BAILE

THREE rival ferry companies last night obtained an injunction ordering 15 French fishermen to end a blockade of Calais which caused 36 hours of cross-Channel travel chaos.

Each of the fishermen — identified by the numbers on their boats — was served with the injunction ordering them to move away within one hour or face fines of £100,000 (£9,000) per person per hour. If they were at sea the orders were left in their homes.

They had imposed the blockade on Tuesday afternoon in protest at being ordered to widen the mesh of their nets to avoid catching under-sized fish.

Within hours, as the boats strung their nets across the harbour at Calais, hundreds of lorries backed up along the M20 approach to Dover. Other fishermen at Boulogne and Dunkirk joined the action and their skippers showed no sign of being ready to lift the blockade which stranded lorries, caused a massive tailback of lorries along the approaches to the British channel ports and infuriated haulage firms who face renewed losses.

Angry haulage firms yesterday went to the see the French Ambassador in London to hand in a demand for £88 million in compensation from the earlier dispute. Although he promised to pass it on to President Chirac, there was little sign that it would have any more success than previous demands.

Thousands of day-tripper foot passengers abandoned their plans to cross to Calais for £1 a head to stock up on duty-free goods. Cars were switched to the Shuttle tunnel crossing or to ports further east and west.

Passengers were angry at the French fishermen for blockading Calais and causing delays. Brynley Fowler, 50, of Launceston, Cornwall, was on his way by coach to Sulou, Spain with 11 relatives, including five children. He said: "It was absolute chaos. The French should be kicked out of the European Union because they hold everyone else, especially us, to ransom."



"I lied to a pollster"

Martial music marked end of Peru siege

An electronic signal received by a member of the Peruvian security forces held hostage inside the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima gave a vital warning that an operation to lift the 126-day siege was about to be launched.

The sound of the Peruvian Marines' official anthem from loudspeakers provided confirmation to the rest of the hostages that the attack was imminent. Page 16

Cricketing idol Compton dies

Denis Compton, the cavalier of cricket and hero to generations of schoolboys, died yesterday in a Windsor hospital after suffering a leg infection. He was 78.

Compton, who represented England at cricket and football, was a idol for many youngsters and was also a pioneer of commercialism in sport. Pages 5 and 50

College votes to stay women-only

Oxford University's last single-sex college is to retain its women-only status. St Hilda's College voted by 17 to 10 to admit male academics as full members, or fellows — but failed by one vote to secure the two-thirds majority needed. The result was heralded by the college's students as a victory for women's education. Page 3

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For British lorrymen stranded at Dover by the blockade anti-French means pro-Tory

Drivers turn Eurosceptic as tempers run short

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

FOR most of the 1,500 lorry drivers caught in the queues snaking along the M20 to Dover yesterday it was the second time in months that the French had wreaked havoc on their business and livelihood.

Some drivers had lost thousands of pounds after being stuck in French lorry blockades in Calais last November. Anti-French feeling was running high yesterday as the drivers faced a 12-hour wait to reach a French port with each minute adding pounds to their debts. Most drivers were angrily resigned to the wait as they shuffled in groups by their stationary cabs, sharing drinks and sandwiches which were meant to see them through to the Continent.

The few French drivers meanwhile stayed in isolated pockets on opposite sides of the motorway as rumours that the French were trying to cheat the police blockades and jump the queues swept the stationary lorries. Indeed, the only drivers who weren't angry at the French were the French drivers. "Everybody has problems. It's normal to strike so we are not angry," Thierry Rinjot said. "The problem is that you English

have no time."

Most however said they simply could not afford to lose more time. And with the prospect of another strike by French lorry drivers on May 5, some drivers said yesterday this was enough to persuade them to put a cross by the Tory candidate on ballot day.

"I'm going to give my vote to the Conservative Party," said Lee Thorn who was trying to get his load of parcels across to Arnhem for his company, Jack Con International. "They are the only ones who will try and make a stand. I don't trust the others to take a firm line with the French."

Last year Mr Thorn was in Ostend for 36 hours losing his employer hundreds of pounds. His father, Barry "Spike" Thorn, who was travelling in the lorry behind his son, was equally disenchanted.

"The company is losing thousands every time this happens. We have lorries stuck here. It is not time we are wasting but the fact that the schedules get messed up as well. We are all worried. It is enough to make a small company like ours go under." Every 20 minutes, another



The Calais blockade has stranded 1,500 lorries on the M20 at Ashford, Kent. Many drivers are still smarting from the last French protest

25 or so lorries was allowed to shunt forward from the four-mile queue on the M20 and onwards to Dover, where they faced further delays. For Bob Jackson, 48, an owner-driver from Preston, his six hours in the queue so far had been long enough for him to rethink his vote.

"If I counted up the money it was costing me every minute I stood here doing nothing I would have a heart attack. It is hundreds of pounds a day. I simply cannot afford it," he said.

On this occasion, Mr Jackson was carrying non-perishable produce to Austria but in the past has not been so lucky. "Last time I was stuck in Calais for three days with frozen lamb and a refrigerator that was losing energy by the hour."

"The French seem to be able to get away with causing this havoc. We need someone to take a hard line and I've decided Mr Blair isn't the one who will do it."

Near the front of the queue, Richard Barry stood only

yards from two French drivers but his looks could have killed from a mile away. "I think all the French drivers should be shunted to the side to let the English drivers through. Let them get a dose of their own medicine," he said.

Mr Barry was trying to get his load to Mainz in Germany for his company, Davis Turner. "I am one of the lucky ones. I get paid whatever happens but each time something like this happens, the boss is losing thousands. He needs us for other jobs. This

sort of thing could close him down. It is very worrying for all of us who work there. This will change my vote, and I'll leave you to guess which way."

Further back up the queue, another owner driver Joe Russell, was cycling at the up and down past the stationary lorries in a bid to forget the delay will cost him around £2,000. His truck contained fish from Glasgow to a variety of French markets. "When the French strike they involve everyone," Mr Russell said. "At the end of

the day, this is my livelihood being messed with."

Fred Higheast from South Ockendon, Essex, joined in: "The trouble with the French is that if they have any grievances they are inclined to bring their country to a halt. But it doesn't just affect them. It affects us, especially as an island."

Indeed, the only drivers who weren't angry with the striking French fishermen were the French lorry drivers waiting their turn to cross back to their homeland yesterday.

Trawlermen vow to continue action until quotas restored

FROM SUSAN BELL IN CALAIS

FLYING a black pirate flag, the flotilla of 22 brightly-coloured fishing boats continued to block the narrow entrance to Calais harbour yesterday. The usually bustling port was almost completely deserted as drivers switched to the Channel Tunnel or travelled to Zeebrugge in Belgium.

Only the giant car park, packed with hundreds of stranded lorries, most of them British, showed any sign of life. The hauliers are unable to use the tunnel which is still

closed to lorries after last year's fire. Many rejected going to Zeebrugge where they feared exceptionally long queues, preferring to gamble on an early resolution of the protest.

All of the 55 daily sailings between Dover and Calais, run by P&O, Stena Line and Seafrance were cancelled yesterday.

Over an impromptu lunch of ravioli aboard his trawler *Sacré Coeur*, Pascal Hamy, the fishermen's spokesman explained the reasons behind the protest. "Sixty per cent of our fishing fleet will be forced out of business in the next

year unless we stop these new EU directives. We don't want this war, we just want to protect our profession and continue to make a living."

"Nothing ever happens unless we take strong action. We are well aware we are making everyone angry by doing this but it is a question of survival for us. Believe me, we would rather be working than doing this."

Starting next year, an EU directive will force the fishermen to increase the size of the mesh of their net from between 84mm and 90 mm to 100mm to protect

resources. The French fishermen say this is unnecessary. Fish are plentiful and the EU is continuing to allow the Dutch and Belgians to use finer mesh nets. The fishermen are also angry about proposed quotas on sole. Under new EU targets, their current quota of 300 tons will be reduced by almost a third.

Mr Hamy said the fishermen have been trying to negotiate for three weeks without success and that they had no choice but to turn to strong-arm tactics. "The British are part of the EU too. They must

put pressure on the French government and the EU to help us resolve this as soon as possible."

Mr Hamy threatened to continue the protest until the French agriculture minister agreed to sign an agreement to abolish the directive and increase their quotas.

The hundreds of stranded lorry drivers were fed up but resigned. Michael Hatton, who is transporting cloth from Italy to his native Manchester, was one of the first to get stuck when he narrowly missed the last Stena Line ferry to escape the blockade on Tuesday afternoon.

"I am used to it now. I got stuck in the last one," he said, referring to last November's dispute by French lorry drivers. I think it is childish. I suppose they have to make their point but why should other people suffer?" he said.

Mr Hatton was sharing his dwindling food supplies with Dave Bacon, whose lorry is loaded with 20 tonnes of Häagen-Dazs ice cream worth £80,000.

"Everyone is really braced off. I have already used a quarter of the diesel in my tank to keep the refrigerator system going."

Mother wins fight over home tuition for ME syndrome girl

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

THE mother of a 15-year-old girl who is too ill to go to school won a High Court ruling yesterday preventing a local authority from cutting her home tuition.

More than 100,000 children could benefit from the decision, which will be tested in the Court of Appeal. Mr Justice Keene ruled that East Sussex County Council was wrong to take account of its own need for budget cuts in considering what was suitable education for Beth Tandy, who suffers chronic fatigue syndrome, known as ME.

The judge found that the council's decision to reduce Beth's tuition from five hours to three was irrational. Her

parents had argued that the revised allocation was not sufficient to give her a realistic chance of successfully completing GCSEs in English, literature and mathematics.

Hilary Tandy, from Lewes, accused the council of unlawfully putting financial savings before the educational needs of her daughter. Proposals to cut home tuition for Beth and others came when the education authority found a shortfall of more than £3 million in its budget for 1996-97.

Councillors agreed last September to cut funding for home tuition from £100,000 to £25,000 a year. Children receiving the service would be

given three hours' teaching a week, rather than five, and new applicants would receive two hours.

The judge said the 1993 Education Act imposed a duty on local education authorities "to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education for children who, by reason of illness or exclusion from school or other reason, needed such arrangements to be made. An authority could not take its financial resources directly into account."

Beth's father, David, said: "Taking legal action was a very big step to take but it followed a natural course. We are delighted and relieved that this is now all over."

Little room at the top for women lawyers

By FRANCES GIBB

WOMEN lawyers are still under-represented at the top level of the legal profession, even though an equal number are entering the field, according to a new survey.

The number of women partners in the 200 biggest solicitors' firms was 26 per cent, the survey by the Young Women Lawyers group found. That was only a one-point rise compared with two years ago.

The survey also found that law firms had a poor record on providing maternity leave. In 1995, 24 per cent of the largest 100 firms offered leave to new fathers. The figure has risen to 39 per cent in the latest survey, but falls to 30 per cent among the largest 200 law firms.

Clare McGlynn, chairperson of Young Women Lawyers and a law lecturer at Newcastle University, said: "Women have been entering the solicitors' profession in almost equal numbers for more than ten years but they are still not rising to the senior levels of the profession."

Labour election war book

Continued from page 1
and his party divided". The way to tackle Mr Major was to say that he is "devious as well as weak and continually breaks his word".

Labour strengths were listed as: "TB (Tony Blair) — young, strong, dynamic; New Labour: changed, safer, new ideas; future/newness; time for change; for all the people; leadership; education; NHS; industry; investment."

Tory weaknesses identified included: "17 years too long — time for them to go; for the few not the many; Major — weak leadership; division; betrayal; tax; NHS; education; crime." Mr Mawhinney said in his letter to candidates: "The war book sets out the unprecedented cynicism with which they planned and conducted this campaign — or, more sinisterly, the cynicism they have shown towards voters." He also said that the document showed that Labour would resort to further "sneers" — including suggesting that people would have to pay to see their GP, and that there would be "more guns, knives and crime".

But senior Labour sources dismissed the Tory decision to release an old document as a pathetic attempt to deflect attention from Labour's plans for National Lottery cash.

SUMMARY OF OUR MESSAGE	
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Students at St Hilda's, Oxford, hail 'victory for female education', but principal warns of teaching crisis

One vote prevents male dons joining all-women college

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

OXFORD University's last single-sex college is to retain its women-only status. St Hilda's College dons voted by 17 to 10 to admit male academics as full members, or fellows, but they failed by one vote to secure the two-thirds majority needed.

The result was hailed by the college's students, who campaigned against change, as a victory for women's education. But Elizabeth Llewellyn-Smith, the principal, said that

the 104-year-old college might have to drop subjects where it has struggled to find women fellows. It has none in chemistry, where it needs three, nor in physics and engineering, where it needs two each.

The college has failed to recruit a single fellow since equal opportunities laws in 1990 opened all university appointments to women and men. The two women appointed by the university in the subjects with shortages

chose to join a mixed college. St Hilda's can guarantee a female appointment only by paying for one itself. Miss Llewellyn-Smith said that it could not afford the £1 million needed to endow a fellowship.

Undergraduates in the shortage subjects are taught by short-term tutors, male or female. "The real objection to this is that you don't have the person who first admitted you, and taught you, and fostered you, and agrees to write references for you for the next 30 years," Miss Llewellyn-Smith said.

But Tamsin Lishman, president of the junior common room and a second-year engineering student, said: "We really feel it is important to have somewhere to promote women's education. The result was a surprise — I had certainly resigned myself to going mixed. It is the best result for the college in the long term, although it will make life quite tough for the moment."

Katherine Terrell, president



Rose Winterton, Holly Joint, Melanie Andrews and Louise Buckley were among St Hilda's students celebrating the ballot yesterday



Three women in a boat: from the class of 1895

of the middle common room, which represents graduate students, added: "The student body was very much in favour of remaining with the status quo, particularly because of the position of women at Oxford."

Just 17 per cent of Oxford fellowships are held by

women, falling to 5 per cent in the sciences. Ms Terrell added: "Students feel they are getting very good quality teaching as it is and it is worth sacrificing some continuity in order to preserve the character of the college."

Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary and a St

Hilda's graduate, was among those who spoke in favour of retaining the all-female status.

Miss Llewellyn-Smith said that she sympathised with student fears on admitting male academics. But the issue would not go away and she predicted it would be raised again soon by governors. "The

undergraduates are very keen not to change because they are worried that allowing men in as fellows would be the thin end of the wedge," she said. "I do sympathise with them. Women's experiences in mixed colleges are not invariably happy."

Hilda Brown, the college's

senior tutor, argued that St Hilda's was at risk of alienating itself from the university by refusing to accept male dons appointed by it.

Cambridge has three all-women colleges: Newnham, New Hall and Lucy Cavendish. New Hall admitted male fellows 25 years ago.

Everest climber found dead in his sleep

By STEPHEN FARRELL

ONE of Britain's most experienced mountaineers was found dead in his sleeping bag at Everest Base Camp yesterday, hours before a planned ascent of the peak's south face.

Mal Duff, 43, a member of the Territorial Army SAS, was leading seven men who had paid to join the expedition. A medical doctor, one of several believed to be with 12 expeditions currently at the base camp, 17,500ft above sea level, gave the cause of death as inhalation of vomit with secondary cardio-respiratory attack. A full post-mortem examination will be held.

Mr Duff's widow, Liz, 40, an experienced mountaineer, who six years ago became the first British woman to reach

23,000ft on Everest, said yesterday that she would give up the sport. She last saw her husband a few days ago when he returned briefly to their home in Culross, Fife, and will fly to Kathmandu on Friday to recover his body.

"I'll never climb again. There is no one else I would want to climb with," she said last night. "While a job as a professional climber and expedition leader is a high-risk profession I never thought the mountains would get Malcolm. He was too good. To some extent I am grateful he died in his sleep and not by way of an accident or climbing error."

Mr Duff, who was born on the slopes of Mount Kenya, is the 148th person and tenth Briton to go on the world's

highest peak since expeditions began in the 1920s.

He had made more than 30 expeditions to the most difficult mountain ranges and 150 first ascents of peaks. He had



Duff, tested regularly to ensure he was fit

made half a dozen previous attempts on Everest without success. He ran his own expedition company, Ascent Travel.

Andy MacNae, national officer of the British Mountaineering Council, said the circumstances of the death were extremely unusual. Both as a climber and territorial SAS member, he was required to have regular medicals and maintain high levels of fitness. "Everyone is shocked. His experience on the great ranges was top notch," Mr MacNae said.

Rod Stables, a cardiologist at the Royal Brompton Hospital and member of the Royal Geographical Society's Expedition Medical Cell, climbed with Mr Duff on Everest in 1992. He said altitude was

extremely unlikely to be the main factor in his death, but may have been a factor by thickening the blood and thereby increasing the likelihood of blood clots.

"Although we do not know enough about the particular circumstances, it is incredibly unlikely for a man of Mal Duff's experience to die from altitude," he said. "Altitude can affect anybody at any time but the most likely thing is that he had an acute heart attack, which may have induced vomit."

Bernice Rennie, Mrs Duff's sister-in-law, said: "Malcolm was one of the bravest men I knew. He was heavily involved in bringing down so many climbers killed on Himalayan mountains last year."

Widow wins back £4m

By A STAFF REPORTER

AN ELDERLY widow, cut out of her husband's will after being accused of infidelity and plotting to murder him, has won back more than half the fortune he left to the RSPCA.

The settlement put an end to a potentially explosive court action by Margie Richardson to wrest the entire bequest, believed to be about £8 million, from the RSPCA. Legal sources in Hong Kong, where the High Court has heard two days of submissions, believe that, under the provisional deal, the RSPCA will receive about £4 million, with the rest of the estate going to Mrs Richardson.

Mrs Richardson, who is wheelchair-bound, was not in court, but her daughter, Rebecca, said afterwards: "For my mother's sake I'm glad it is over. As the settlement has not been finalised yet, I cannot comment further."

The RSPCA declined to comment. Leon Richardson, a businessman, financial commentator and dog-lover, left all his wealth to the charity in a will written nine days before he died, aged 77, in May 1995. It came after a bitter break-up from his wife of 40 years in August 1996.

After returning from holiday in Cuba, the impotent Mr Richardson accused his wife of seeking sexual thrills from young gigolos, being a drug addict and hiring thugs to murder him so she could get his money. He called her a

"witch in league with the devil".

Mrs Richardson, 77, claimed his accusations were so wild and untrue that they proved her husband had lost his mind. She said he had written an earlier will leaving her everything and that the later will was invalid because of his mental illness.

The settlement has to be confirmed by Deputy Judge Edward Woolley. The trial was expected to last two weeks and would have plunged the family into the public eye. Love letters from Mr Richardson to his wife had already been read to the court by John Scott, QC, counsel for Mrs Richardson, to illustrate their "blissfully happy" marriage.

Boy aged 9 expelled for drugs offence

By JOHN O'LEARY

A NINE-YEAR-OLD boy has been expelled from a primary school in Barnet, north London, after being found with drugs. He is believed to be the youngest pupil to be excluded from school for a drugs offence.

Ian Naghien was suspended from Whittings Hill last month when he was found with a substance believed to be cannabis. Maureen McGoldrick, the head teacher, expelled him when the school returned after Easter. Governors and education authority representatives are meeting shortly to decide whether to endorse her decision.

A spokesman said yesterday that no appeal had been lodged by the boy's parents, although they were reported to be angry that they were not present when the police questioned their son. No further police proceedings against him are expected.

The boy's father, also called Ian, said he had always told his son not to touch drugs. The boy was said to have told his parents that he found the substance in class, but he told police that he found it on the breadboard at home.

Head teachers have appealed for the national curriculum to cover illegal drugs from the earliest years. Cannabis is the drug most frequently used by children, according to surveys.

Judge absolves transplant team of negligence

By RICHARD DUCE

THE PARENTS of a baby boy left brain-damaged during a heart transplant operation lost a legal battle against doctors yesterday when a judge ruled that he believed the couple would still have consented to surgery if they knew of the risks.

Sir Maurice Drake cleared the surgical team at Harefield Hospital in Middlesex, including Sir Magdi Yacoub, of negligence in their treatment of Matthew Poynter, who was left brain damaged.

Kevin and Linda Poynter, the child's parents, had said that they would have refused consent for the operation in December 1987 had they been told of the risk, no matter how small. They objected to transplants on religious grounds and said it was only after pressure from medical staff that they agreed to the operation.

But the judge, in his hour-long ruling, said he believed the majority of, if not all, parents would still agree to surgery for their children if doctors told them the risk of such damage was a minimal 1 per cent. "I fully appreciate that they will be unable to accept my finding in this matter," he said.

He said Mr Poynter, 40, and his wife, 38, from Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, had lived for ten years with the "heart-breaking experience" of bring-

ing up a brain-damaged child. "I don't at all doubt it's their present strong belief and conviction that had they been told of any risk they would have withheld consent. But I have to consider whether that would have been the position in 1987."

The judge accepted that "on a very narrow balance of probability" that Mr and Mrs Poynter were not warned of the specific risk of brain damage but would have been told had they asked. He ruled that, in Matthew's case, there was no duty — in view of the questions asked by the Poynters — to disclose that risk. He held that their questions before surgery were directed at Matthew's quality of life if he survived. "I conclude that nothing that these parents asked made it known to any of the medical team that they were being asked to inform of the risks of serious permanent brain damage or disability."

The judge rejected the couple's claims that doctors overstepped the mark and put unfair pressure on them for the surgery to proceed.

Last night Mr Poynter, an osteopath, and his wife, a former Jehovah's Witness, neither of whom was in court yesterday, refused to comment on the ruling. Tom Osborne, their solicitor, said an appeal was being considered.

Doctor was over the limit twice in two days

By A STAFF REPORTER

A HOSPITAL consultant who left his job because of a drink problem was jailed for four months yesterday after repeatedly drinking and driving.

David Hannam, 50, who is facing bankruptcy, was banned from driving for ten years at Chester Magistrates' Court after being convicted on three drink-driving charges, the first of which was two weeks after he was back at the wheel following a three-year driving ban for two offences.

He was found twice in two days to be 3½ times the legal limit. A month later, while on bail, he was three times over. On two occasions police found him asleep at the wheel and on the third he was discovered slumped against the car having drunk three quarter-size bottles of vodka.

Bernard Byrne, for the prosecution, said Dr Hannam, who treated victims of the IRA bomb in Warrington, began drinking when his marriage broke up. His problems were compounded when a colleague with whom he had an affair committed suicide when the relationship ended.

Guy Dodd, in mitigation, said Dr Hannam had resigned as consultant anaesthetist at Warrington Hospital and was £100,000 in debt. Dr Hannam admitted two charges of drink-driving. He denied the third charge, but was convicted.

How a cat got Mounties their man

By NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

A DNA "pawprint" from a cat has been used for the first time to convict a murderer. In October 1994 Shirley-Anne Dugway, 32, disappeared from her home on Prince Edward Island, on Canada's eastern seaboard.

Her car, stained with blood, was found after a few days, and three weeks later a jacket stained with the same blood was discovered. Inside the jacket the Royal Canadian Mounted Police found a few white cat hairs. After her body was found in a shallow grave in May 1995 her

estranged husband, Douglas Beamish, was arrested and charged. He lived with his parents and a white cat, an American shorthair named Snowball.

The Mounties asked geneticists at the US National Cancer Institute if it were possible to match the hairs found on the jacket with those of Snowball. In Nature, Dr Stephen O'Brien and colleagues describe how the job was done.

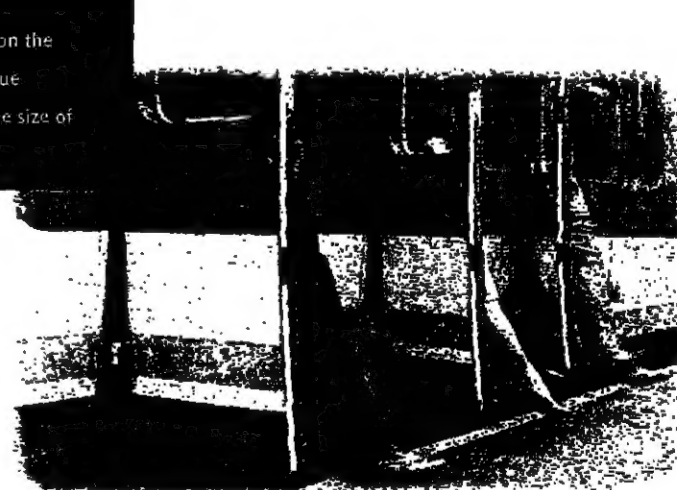
They extracted DNA from the root of one of the hairs found on the jacket, amplified it and produced a "catprint" based on ten regions of DNA commonly found in domestic cats. They took a blood sample from Snowball and made the

same analysis, showing that there was a perfect match at all ten regions.

The odds of this arising by chance were estimated by taking samples from ten cats on Prince Edward Island and nine other cats from around America. The scientists concluded that the chances of the hair coming from a cat other than Snowball were 50 million to one.

This evidence was placed before the Supreme Court on Prince Edward Island and Beamish was convicted of second-degree murder on July 19 last year. It is, the scientists believe, the first case of a murder conviction based on genetic evidence from a cat.

Thanks to the commuter on the 7:40 to Waterloo who told her colleague that she was 'Staggered... furious' at the size of her overdraft charges...



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First Aid

A-OPEN THE AIRWAY

1. Remove obvious debris from the casualty's mouth.
2. Tilt the casualty's head back and lift his chin upwards.

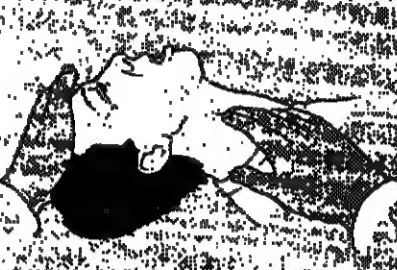


B-BREATHING

Check if the casualty is breathing by looking, listening and feeling for air coming from the mouth.

C-CIRCULATION

Check the pulse in the casualty's neck for 5 seconds.



Not breathing, pulse present.

Start artificial ventilation

1. Pinch the casualty's nose firmly.
2. Take a deep breath and seal your lips around the mouth.
3. Blow slowly into his mouth watching the chest rise. Let the chest fall completely. Give breaths at a rate of about 10 per minute.
4. If you must leave the casualty to go to the hospital, give 10 breathes first, and then return quickly to check.
5. Add artificial ventilation and continue at 10 breaths per minute.
6. Check for pulse after every 10 breaths.

Not breathing, no pulse.



DEBILITATING

Large wounds: wear gloves if available; if not, ensure you have no cuts or grazes on your hands that may come into contact with blood from the open wound.

Expose the wound to free from broken glass or other foreign objects. Expose the wound and apply pressure.

Ensure direct pressure is applied to the wound with your hand or your fingers. If the wound is gaping, press a clean cloth or dressing over it.

For severe bleeding, use a bandage to secure the dressing. If the bleeding is not controlled, use a tourniquet.

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STRAINS AND SPRAINS

Strains are caused by over stretching of muscles. Sprains are caused when the ligaments and tissues of a joint are wrenched or torn.

1. Rest the injured limb in the most comfortable position.
2. Place a wrapped ice pack, or cold compress on to the injured part for at least 20 minutes.
3. Compress the injured part with a thick pad of cotton wool and bandage.
4. Elevate the limb.



CHOKING

1. Encourage the casualty to cough.
2. Open the mouth and remove any obvious debris.
3. Bend the casualty forward and slap firmly between the shoulder blades up to 5 times.
4. Check the mouth remove any visible obstruction. Repeat backslaps if necessary.

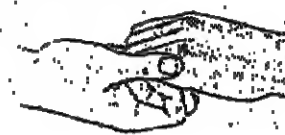


5. For a baby, place him along your forearm, or for a young child, place him across your knees with head lower than the stomach and carry out backslaps as described above.



If backslaps do not work, try abdominal thrusts.

1. Stand behind casualty, put arms around the waist and clasp your hands together (one palm up and one palm down).



2. Give a sharp pull diagonally upwards. Repeat up to 5 times.

3. If this does not work, do not give up, call an ambulance and the alternate backslaps with 5 abdominal thrusts.

Never give abdominal thrusts to a baby, pregnant woman or a person who has a heart condition. If the casualty has a heart condition, call an ambulance to follow the ABC of first aid.

BITES AND STINGS

1. Remove the sting with a pair of tweezers then apply a cold compress.
2. Seek medical help if breathing becomes difficult or pain and swelling persists.
3. If casualty becomes unconscious, be prepared to follow the ABC of Resuscitation and call for medical help.
4. Bites that cause slight bleeding should be washed with water for 5 minutes then medical help should be sought.
5. Bites that cause severe bleeding must be treated as if severe bleeding then medical help should be sought.
6. Dog bites should be reported to the police.



KEEP THIS PAGE HANDY.

THERE ARE 50,000 FEWER NURSES THAN IN 1990.

How can this government justify the loss of so many nurses? Are we suddenly getting less ill? Sustaining less injuries? Government underfunding has led to huge staff shortages in the NHS. This year, only 9,000 nurses will qualify, compared to 37,000 in 1983. Since 1990, 43,000 NHS hospital beds have been lost. No wonder so many people are waiting over a year and a half for treatment. We can't allow this government to run our health service into the ground. If the NHS has ever come to your rescue, make sure you return the favour on May 1st.

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ALLIANCE
LEICESTER



Denis Compton as Brylcreem boy and footballer, toasting his 75th birthday at Lord's in 1993; and in his cricketing heyday. He won 78 England caps at cricket and 12 at football, as well as winning the FA Cup with Arsenal

Major leads the tributes to cavalier Compton

JOHN MAJOR led the tributes yesterday for Denis Compton, the cavalier of cricket and hero to generations of schoolboys, who died in a Windsor hospital after suffering a leg infection. He was 78.

Compton, who represented England at cricket and football, was a idol for many youngsters because of his supreme talent and flamboyant lifestyle, which often involved him arriving at matches still wearing his dinner jacket.

He was also a pioneer of the commercial era, being the first English sportsman to employ an agent. He became known as the "Brylcreem boy" because of his advertisements for the hair lotion.

He played in 78 Tests and, in

Capped at cricket and football, Denis Compton embraced the spirit of sport as well as realising its commercial potential. John Goodbody writes

1947, his greatest season, scored a record 3,816 runs. He hit the winning stroke at the Oval against Australia in 1953 when England regained the Ashes after 19 years. He also won 12 caps for England in wartime football internationals and played outside-left in Arsenal's FA Cup winning team of 1950.

Cricket grounds across the country observed a minute's silence before their county games yesterday. Mr Major said: "There will be

a tear in many an eye at the loss of one of the greatest batsmen cricket has ever known. It wasn't just the game he played, it was the way he played it. Quite literally, he is irreplaceable and the memory of him and the way he played will last for as long as the game of cricket itself."

His widow, Christine, said that her husband would have been very proud to have died on St George's Day "because he was very British

and very proud to be British". Compton, who lived at Burnham, Buckinghamshire, died at 1.45am at Princess Margaret Hospital having undergone an operation at the weekend. He had hip replacement surgery last November.

Kim Smith, a friend, said yesterday: "It's a great shock to all the family as he seemed to be getting much better. He was in very good spirits on Tuesday, but suddenly started to go downhill."

Ted Dexter, the former England captain whose extrovert style made him a natural successor to Compton in the 1960s, said: "Denis was an inspiration to me. I saw him at Lord's as a schoolboy while he was fielding on the boundary. He

adorned the game and we should mourn his passing."

Speaking on Radio 5 Live, Sir Colin Cowdrey, another contemporary, said that Compton combined a battling instinct with a smile. He added: "He charmed the crowds by the way he used to wave his bat in the air. He just captivated them. People would come away from a match much happier just for the sight of him playing."

Brian Close, a former England captain, said: "He was a great player and, in my estimation, a great man. He played cricket in an entertaining and enjoyable way — he was a genius."

David Gower, another former England captain, said: "Denis was

one of those players with the skill, flair and courage to dominate and change matches — and the character to dominate off the field as well. He would have been in my top three of our greatest batsmen of all time."

A stand at Lord's was named after Compton, who played for Middlesex from 1936 to 1957, but he never forgot his roots in Hendon, north London. Eighteen months ago he paid for and presented a trophy for the outstanding cricketer at Bell Lane JMI school, where he had been educated.

He was married three times. As well as his widow, he leaves two daughters, Victoria and Charlotte, from his last marriage and three

sons, Richard, Patrick and Brian, from his previous two.

Compton's brother, Leslie, was the Middlesex wicket-keeper for many years and also played centre-half for Arsenal, winning two England caps in 1951.

Hilda Addington, the sister of Denis and Leslie, said: "Right from the start it was obvious that he was a natural. I remember people seeing him bat when he was just three or four years old and being impressed. Later on, we all used to go to watch him play. They were marvelous years for us all."

Leading article, page 23
Obituary, page 25
Cricketing genius, page 50

Son spends pools win buying back father's posthumous George Cross

By ROBIN YOUNG

A POOLS winner has spent all his prizemoney, and eight years of research, on recovering his father's George Cross. Donald Ellingworth, a Dunkirk veteran in his seventies, eventually traced the medal to a dealer in Canada, from whom he bought it for £8,500.

Mr Ellingworth started his search for his father's medal in 1989. It had been sold, along with his other decorations, by his stepmother, Jessie, for £720 in 1968. "With the loss of the medal, my father had been, to a certain extent, forgotten about, but not any more," he said.

Chief Petty Officer Reg Ellingworth was awarded the George Cross posthumously after being blown up at the age of 42 while trying to defuse a bomb in 1940. His



Reg Ellingworth

son, who lives in Norwich, said: "Tracing the medals was not easy, but I was determined. I simply was not going to give up." He discovered the

original purchaser, a dealer in Yorkshire, and contacted him. He then followed the trail to Canada.

Mr Ellingworth said yesterday: "When I found the dealer, I was told I could have the George Cross back at a price of £8,500. I agreed straight away."

The George Cross and the other medals arrived in the post and yesterday he gave them on loan to the Imperial War Museum, where they will go on display. He said it had been worth every penny: "I could not believe it when they arrived. I just stared at them."

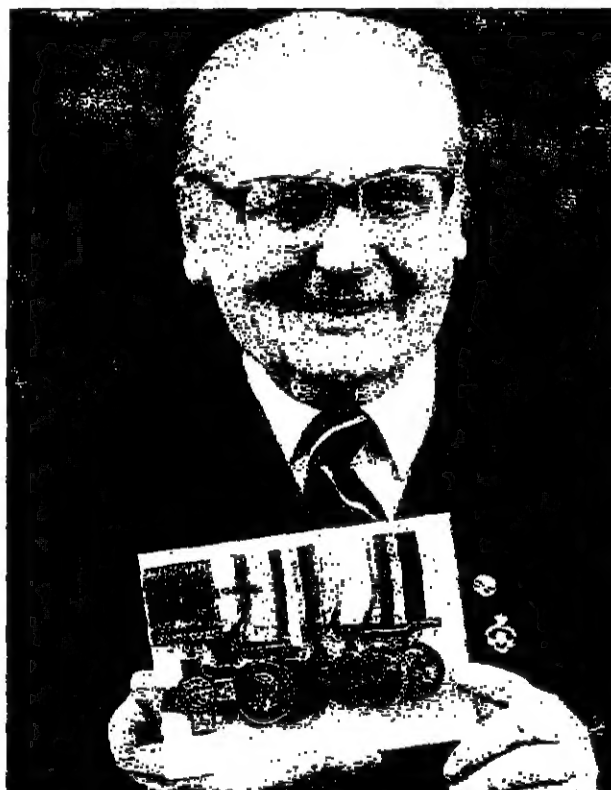
The official account of how Chief Petty Officer Ellingworth earned his George Cross describes how he and a Lieutenant-Commander Ryan were trying to make safe a magnetic mine which was

hanging from its parachute in Dagenham, east London. It exploded, killing both of them. They had worked together on many assignments.

"The principal hazards of these mines was the fact that the clock of the bomb fuse was normally timed to explode after the mine about 22 seconds after its fall," the citation says.

"If it failed to do so, it could be restarted by the slightest movement, even a football. The amount of the clock already run off could not be known and, once it was restarted, the time for escape could not be more than a few seconds."

Mr Ellingworth said: "I was told my father and his colleague had to run 400 yards in ten seconds to get away. Even Linford Christie could not have managed that."



Donald Ellingworth with his father's decorations

School's out for the well-behaved

By PAUL WILKINSON

SCHOOLCHILDREN are to be offered days out during term-time for good behaviour. Actions witnessed by staff such as voluntarily picking up litter, holding a door open for other pupils or getting reading books out on time will earn supervised trips.

The scheme at Mandale middle school, Bradford, was suggested by the school council, which includes 16 children representing the school's 460 nine to 13-year-olds. Politeness and community spirit will earn credits that add up towards the days out.

Michael Joyce, the headmaster, said: "We thought that, while a lot of children got rewarded for academic excellence, children who came in every day and simply behaved very well never got any re-

ward. The children came up with ideas like McDonald's vouchers, visits to the ice-rink and a non-uniform day. I suggested we could reward them with visits or a nature ramble with a picnic in the summer, and the children were very keen."

Nick Seaton, chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, the parents' pressure group, said that treats for what should be normal behaviour was wrong. "It is handing over power to the pupils and giving them the wrong lessons for the future."

But Mr Joyce said: "In industry and commerce, workers are rewarded with things like shares in the company. Why shouldn't children be rewarded for being good?"

one bill.

Treasured landscape devastated by fire



A fireman taking a break from fighting the fire that swept a thousand acres of heathland in west Cornwall, the most recent and devastating of outbreaks in the West Country over the past two months

By NICK NUTTALL
AND MICHAEL HORSBY

ONE of Europe's most important landscapes was the latest casualty yesterday of the dry weather as fire swept through a thousand acres of heathland in west Cornwall.

Firefighters, tackling another big blaze in the county, worked through the night and most of yesterday trying to bring the flames, between St Ives and St Just, under control. Officers suspect that the blaze, which caused a pall of smoke visible several miles away, might have been started deliberately and have launched an investigation.

At the same time, more than a

hundred firefighters on the Isle of Wight were yesterday tackling a fire that engulfed 200 acres of woodland at Brightstone Forest. The fire was in an area of woodland that is one of the last English homes of the red squirrel and which harbours buzzards and lizards. The island's stretched fire service at one stage took the rare step of calling all full-time officers to duty, and four fire appliances were taken over by ferry from Portsmouth to provide relief in the event of other incidents.

The blaze in Cornwall is the third huge fire to hit the West Country in recent weeks. Two square miles of Dartmoor near Bovey Tracey were devastated in one incident and several square miles of heathland at Post

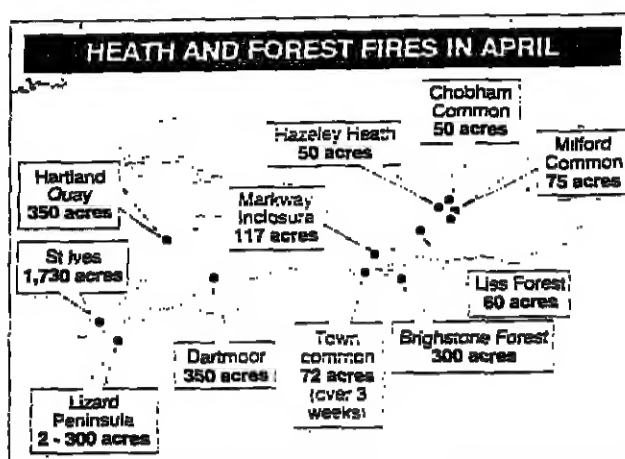
bridge, in the heart of the moor, in an earlier one. Fire brigades across the South and South-West have hardly seen a day go by in the past four weeks when crews have not been tackling grass, forest and heath fires. Some of the incidents have been linked with swaling, traditional burning of heath and moor, which has got out of hand because of the dry conditions.

Others, however, have been linked with accidents in which careless visitors have dropped lighted matches or cigarettes. But arson has not been ruled out in many of the outbreaks that began in March. The latest fire in west Cornwall happened in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, home to an ancient field system and several Sites

of Special Scientific Interest. A spokesman for Penwith District Council said yesterday: "It has one of the largest concentrations of scheduled ancient monuments in western Europe."

John Warren, of the Cornwall fire service, said: "There were reports of fire being seen in three separate places, so it could be other than accidental."

At the height of the blaze about 120 firemen and 30 fire appliances and support vehicles were involved. Several isolated farm buildings were evacuated for a time as a precaution. Water had to be pumped from a stream and taken to the area in fire brigade vehicles each capable of carrying 2,000 gallons. The fire was brought under control by the afternoon.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Driver of towed car charged over death

A man has appeared in court charged with causing death by dangerous driving after his car, which was under tow, demolished a bus shelter, killing a six-year-old girl.

Stephen Duffield, for the prosecution, told Newcastle Crown Court there was a steering defect that Paul Scafron, 28, of Sunderland, must have known about. "It is dangerous to drive if it is obvious there is a defect that could cause a risk in controlling the car. If a death is caused that becomes death by dangerous driving," Mr Scafron denies the charge.

Graves damaged

Vandals have smashed about 100 headstones at Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin, burial place of Irish leaders such as Daniel O'Connell and Michael Collins. None of the most celebrated graves was damaged, but stone Celtic crosses dating from more than 100 years ago were broken. The cost of the repairs has been estimated at £150,000.

Acting up

Actors working in regional subsidised theatres have won an 18.4 per cent pay increase, taking their minimum to £225 a week this year and £250 next year. After a long dispute Equity, the actors' union, reached the deal with the Theatre Management Association. The subsistence allowance for actors working away from home will also be raised.

Early warning

Karen Dunbar, from Anfield, Liverpool, called the fire brigade at 3.30am when she could not understand why her smoke alarm was going off. Firefighters found her neighbours' house ablaze and broke in to move the sleeping O'Neill family to safety.

Army trial delay

The jury hearing corruption charges against Major John Ewart, 51, of Dilton Marsh, Wiltshire, who was responsible for ordering food for the British garrison in Berlin, has been discharged at Southwark Crown Court. A new trial will begin today.

Guiding touch



Jessica Hyde, 12, from Wordsley, West Midlands, who has been deaf since birth, became the first Guide with a hearing impairment to be awarded a radio communication badge. She deciphers messages by placing her fingers on a Morse key.

Capital offence

The new Judgment Day ride at the London Dungeon was halted while staff rescued a goldfish from a canal that carries people in barges through a mock execution scene. A practical joker is thought to have put the fish in the chemically treated water.

Apology to end tale of Beatrix Botanist

By TIM JONES

MORE than 100 years after her quest for recognition as a serious botanist was rebuffed by a male-dominated society, Beatrix Potter will receive an apology today.

Long before she wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Potter had become an authority on fungi. In April 1997 she submitted a paper, *The Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae*, to the Linnean Society of London. Two weeks later she requested permission for the paper to be withdrawn, claiming she wished to do more research.

Although this was partly supported by the fact that, later that year, she prepared many highly magnified studies of spore development, the truth seems to be that she was wounded by the way in which her work was received.

John Marsden, executive secretary of the Linnean Society, said: "Her paper had to be refereed by two people, one of whom was Sir William Thistleton-Dyer. Although he apparently knew next to nothing about botany, he became the director of Kew Gardens, so was highly respected." He scorned her ideas, which are now accepted, and suggested that she should go back to school before trying to reach experts.

Fortunately for generations of children, she became convinced there was no future for her in botany and turned to drawing pictures of rabbit families for her young cousins.

Dr Marsden said that, at today's meeting, recognition of her work and a form of apology would be made for the way in which she had been treated.

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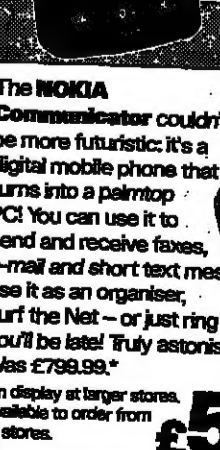
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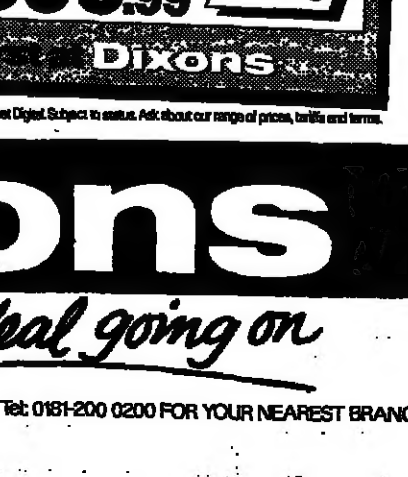


The **NOKIA Communicator** couldn't be more futuristic. It's a digital mobile phone that turns into a palmtop. You can use it to send and receive faxes, e-mail and short text messages, use it as an organiser, surf the Net - or just ring home to say you'll be late! Truly astonishing! Was £799.99.

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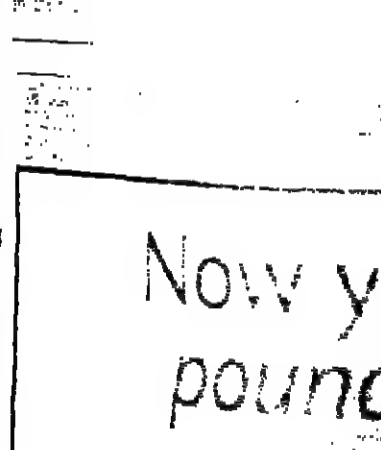
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ALLIANCE LEICESTER

Fleeing military destroyed anything that could not be looted, says conservation worker

Civil war forces Briton to abandon rare rhinos

BY NICK NUTTALL
ENVIRONMENT
CORRESPONDENT

A BRITISH woman who has spent more than 13 years trying to save the world's rarest mammal, the northern white rhino, from extinction has been forced to leave the animals to their fate because of the civil war in Zaire.

Kes Hillman Smith, who helped to build a strong anti-poaching service in the Garamba National Park in northern Zaire, said she feared poachers now had the upper hand. Fuel, vehicles and radio equipment have been looted or destroyed and two spotter planes used to co-ordinate the patrols were flown to Kenya to prevent them from being stolen.

Dr Hillman Smith and her husband, Fraser Smith, left for the sake of their daughter, Chyulu, 11, and son, Doungu, 8, after missionaries and other Westerners fled months ago. Dr Hillman Smith, in London yesterday to call for an international effort to save the animals, said they had been trying to monitor the last 30 northern whites from Nairobi.

Monitoring had proved impossible since February, when anti-government forces occupied the park. The last sighting of a rhino was in January. Poachers, who are well armed, killed two rhinos last year and the civil war was likely to have intensified their efforts, Dr Hillman Smith said.

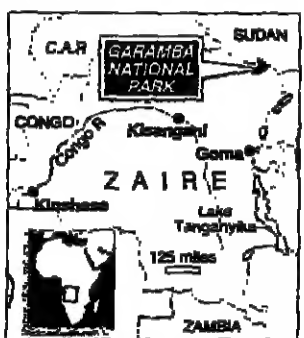
"In the long term I am optimistic. But there are immediate needs that are going



Kes Hillman Smith: "In the long term I am optimistic"

to be very expensive to get the project going again. I just hope we have not lost too many rhinos."

Exactly how many rhinos may have been killed is unknown. Five of the animals have had radio tracking devices inserted into their horns as part of a pioneering experi-



ment. But Dr Hillman Smith said the loss of the radio equipment meant it was likely that no one was listening for the animals.

The difficulties facing the park come after a long period of civil unrest in the country. The main damage to the park was caused by government troops and mercenaries fleeing before the rebels moved in. "The lawlessness of the fleeing military was the biggest problem... anything that could not be looted was destroyed," Dr Hillman Smith said.

The northern white rhino is a sub-species related to the southern white rhino, which is found in large numbers in South Africa. In 1980 there were several hundred in Sudan but, by 1983, only two confirmed sightings were

made. The war in that country had given poachers the opportunity to hunt the animals for their horns, which are exported to Yemen and the Far East.

In 1963 there were an estimated 1,300 northern white rhinos in Zaire but rebel forces have led to numbers falling to a few hundred. Their numbers have since fallen as low as 15.

By leaving Garamba, Dr Hillman Smith has left behind her life's work and a group of animals that she can distinguish individually from markings, the shape of their horns, and notches and hairs on their ears.

All have names, such as Curly Horn, Notch and Noel, a rhino born in November 1987, but only discovered at Christmas. Dr Hillman Smith said that the threat from the unrest and loss of the anti-poaching patrols also threatened 11,000 elephants, 25,000 buffalo and "the only giraffe in Zaire".

Dr Hillman Smith, who graduated from the University of Leicester in 1975, joined the World Wide Fund for Nature in 1983 to carry out a survey of rhinos in Sudan and Zaire. She met her husband, who also works in the park, while in Africa. She is a qualified pilot and flew many times over the park during anti-poaching operations.

Mr Smith said that their aircraft had often been fired on by poachers armed with automatic weapons and hand grenades. They flew a Cessna 206 provided by the Frankfurt Zoological Museum and a 1947 Piper Cub.



Dr Hillman Smith and helpers tagging rhinos in the Garamba National Park

First-time balloonist sets his sights on Branson

BY OLIVER AUGUST
AND DAREH GREGORIAN

A SCOTTISH landowner challenged Richard Branson yesterday in the race to be first to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon. James Manclark, 57, who has never flown a balloon, said he hoped to take off at the same time as Mr Branson starts his third attempt this winter.

"I'm a man who believes that luck is very important to anything that happens in life," Mr Manclark said. "It's best to back a lucky man, and I am a lucky man."

Mr Branson welcomed the challenge. "I do wish him luck. He needs it," he said.

Mr Branson's last attempt in January ended 17 hours and 400 miles from where he began in Marrakesh, Morocco. He said his team would try to "get it right this time. We are now confident that a world-beating balloon can be built in time to bring the last great aviation record to a United Kingdom-based team."

Eight balloons in all will take part in the race for the aviation first, including the American Steve Fossett, who set world records for distance and endurance in his failed attempt last year.

Mr Manclark, of Haddington, East Lothian, will have Andrew Elson, an experienced high-altitude balloonist, as his co-pilot. They will be flying in a balloon similar to the one used by Mr Branson's main challengers, the Breitling Orbiter from Switzerland. The balloon, a third of the size of Mr Branson's, is being built by Cameron Balloons, a British manufacturer.

Mr Manclark is no stranger to challenges. He learnt to fly a Tiger Moth as a 16-year-old at Harrow School and still practises stunt flying over the Scottish Highlands. He was one of the first people to cross the Firth of Forth in a glider and he competed in the 1968 and 1972 Olympics in the luge and bobsleigh events. He later competed in powerboat racing.

Mr Manclark, who plans to begin his trip from Spain or Italy, called his latest endeavour "a high-tech adventure".

Vitamins aid Alzheimer's

ALZHEIMER'S disease sufferers can be given seven extra months of mobility and physical health by taking vitamin E or selegiline, a drug used to treat Parkinson's disease (Ian Murray writes).

Although the treatment does not have any effect on the patient's mental condition, a two-year clinical trial has found that patients given one or other of these drugs showed 25 per cent less deterioration in their ability to eat, dress

and cook. Reporting in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the researchers say patients receiving both or one of the treatments did better than those on a placebo, while there was a 13 per cent reduction in the number going into a nursing home among people taking vitamin E.

Because the study involved only people who were already showing severe symptoms of the disease it is not clear whether it might be possible to

slow down the degenerative advance if the treatments are taken at an earlier stage.

The researchers, from 35 American centres specialising in ageing, say that nobody should take the drugs without careful medical supervision. Selegiline should not be taken with other drugs such as antidepressants or narcotics. The large doses of vitamin E needed to make the treatment effective can cause increased bleeding.

Pollution may protect against asthma

BY IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

A GERM-FREE lifestyle and the modern Western diet are largely responsible for the threefold increase in asthma cases among children during the past 30 years, a leading environmental medicine specialist said yesterday.

Infections in early childhood and high air pollution levels could build immunity to asthma, Anthony Seaton, of Aberdeen University, said in a lecture to the Royal College of Physicians. "There is something about westernisation that seems to

promote asthma and other allergic diseases," he said. A diet rich in unsaturated fats could stimulate the production of the antibody that causes allergy. Low levels of fruit and vegetable consumption meant that people absorbed too little of vitamins C and E, weakening their resistance to inhaled irritants.

Research showed that the risk of hay fever in children declined with increasing family size, with the older children more likely to suffer than younger ones. This pointed to the conclusion that the higher rate of childhood infections in

larger families protected against asthma and hay fever because it encouraged the development of anti-infection cells and inhibited production of the asthma inflammation cell. "If infections protect against asthma it is plausible that air pollution might do so as well," Professor Seaton said. There was clear evidence that the prevalence of the disease increased as pollution decreased.

He discounted central heating, poorly ventilated homes, the house mite and a growth in the number of cats and dogs as contributory factors to the rising incidence of allergy and asthma.

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By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

☐ *Sacred Britain*, the official guide to the Sacred Land project (Martin Palmer and Nigel Palmer, with a foreword by David Bellamy; published by Judy Piatkus; £25)

☐ *Sacred Britain*, the official guide to the Sacred Land project (Martin Palmer and Nigel Palmer, with a foreword by David Bellamy; published by Judy Piatkus; £25)

The Archbishop of Canterbury said it was important that the connections between religious and environmental concerns were strengthened: "The great world religions will fail as instruments and servants of a loving God if they



BY DALYA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

Mr. Kamen said: "I come across a lot of talented kids and I come across ambitious kids and eager-to-be-a-film-composer kids. Rarely are they in the same combination."

Mr Csanyi-Wills does not come from a musical family; his mother is a theatre designer and his father a businessman. Composing comes so easily that he wrote the required 20 minutes of music for the film in two days: he has just sent it to Los Angeles.

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ELECTION 97

Cashing in on the lottery

Charles Bremner watches Labour launch its policy where everyone is a winner

— page 14

New Labour, new donkey jacket

Michael Foot's smart new look

Valerie Elliott — page 13

THE pupils of the Royal High School in Edinburgh yesterday voted to reopen their old school building (Gillian Bowditch writes).

The old school was converted in the late 1970s at a cost of £3 million in anticipation of devolution and stands ready to house the nation's first parliament. Yesterday the Scottish Nationalist Party, which would remove the dust sheets from the deserted benches, received 46 per cent of the vote in the school's mock election held at the new school at Davidson's Mains.

Of the 460 pupils who chose to vote, the nationalists polled 212. The Liberal Democrats were second, with 117. Lab-

Nationalists win Edinburgh school poll

our polled 93, and the Conservatives polled 38.

The SNP, which has wooed the youth vote with a promise to enfranchise 16-year-olds, polled the most votes in all age groups. Instead of pupil candidates the real candidates in the highly marginal seat of Edinburgh West, where Lord James Douglas-Hamilton is defending a Tory majority of 876, were stimulated by a school election in 1992 when he discovered he had most in common with the Liberal Democrats.

booths in the business studies classroom yesterday, a small group of senior pupils watch the third and fourth year cast their votes. One who intends to be among the first MSPs (Member of a Scottish Parliament) is Kevin Lang, 17, senior vice-captain and prime mover behind the mock election held this week.

He says his interest in politics was stimulated by a school election in 1992 when he discovered he had most in common with the Liberal Democrats.

"I'm a strong advocate of a Scottish parliament and I support proportional representation. I like the Liberal Democrats honesty in admitting taxes have to be raised to get a better education and health service," he says. I would love to stand for a Scottish parliament. We don't know what Tony Blair's Scottish parliament will offer, but I would be in favour of a tax-raising parliament."

Simon MacLean, 17, has been a member of the SNP for six months. "I

think Tony Blair treats Scotland with total disdain. I think he sees it as a place which gives a guaranteed vote for Labour but I don't think that will always be the case. The SNP is always going to be hampered by the electoral system but it is the only party that can deliver meaningful change for Scotland."

"Labour has never been given a chance. The Labour people voted for last time is different from Labour now," says Caroline McLeod. "I agreed more with

John Smith but I've always wanted to support Labour. The Tories are wrecking the country."

"I don't like Tony Blair. He's cheesy," says Jenna Heinemeier. "But I would vote for him just to get the Tories out. John Major looks like the schoolboy who got bullied at school and will always be bullied by everyone else."

Despite their fervour, they are sympathetic to their peers who have no interest in politics. "Politics is very alien to a lot of young folk," says Kevin. "Especially Scots," says Jenna. "We've always lived under a Tory government. They just think politics is English, it's Conservative and it has nothing to do with us."

Cool appraisal of policy triumphs over youthful idealism as pupils join the classroom hustings

'Blair has made his party electable again'

Louise Meade, 18, from Highbury Fields School, supports Labour. She lives in a three-bedroom council terrace house. Her mother, a housing personnel officer, also supports Labour. Her father is a computer engineer.

"I am from a working-class background and Labour are for the working class," she says. "I have been brought up under a Conservative government and I am very disillusioned. We do need a change." Louise admires Tony Blair: "He has realised that a totally Left socialist party hasn't got in power for the last 18 years." But her favourite Labour politician is Tony Benn, after seeing him address a public meeting in her constituency last week. "He

is a management consultant and her mother a housewife. They live in a detached, three-bedroom country house. "The mood of the country seems to be pro-change," she says. "The Labour Party provides the most realistic option to the Conservatives." She admires Margaret Thatcher. "I am not sure I entirely agree with everything she did but you can't fail to admire her charisma and ability as a politician."

As for Mr Blair: "He has made the Labour Party electable." Jenny says: "I am pro-Europe but equally I don't believe Britain should be doing anything which is not in its own interests. I like the idea of a single currency if the economics of it can be sorted out." The forgotten issues of this election are the environment and homelessness, she believes.

Katherine Hardcastle, 16, from Laymer School, has just joined the Labour Party and is a member of Amnesty International. Her mother is a teacher and her father a lecturer; politically, both are on the Centre-Left. They live in a four-bedroom semi-detached house.

"I am quite enthusiastic about new Labour. Tony Blair is very charismatic. She is happy with Labour's policy of turning grant-maintained schools into foundation schools by giving local authorities some influence over them. "I don't think they are in the business of closing down good schools." As for Labour's proposal to have parental ballots to end selection, she said: "It's fair." Even the Labour's threat of compulsory homework is welcomed.

She admires Glenda Jackson, who she says is "very committed and hard working and well-informed". Labour's strongest policy, she believes, is allowing councils to spend more on building new homes. "It will put an end to local authorities having to send families into temporary accommodation which is really expensive and demoralising and degrading."

DOMINIC KENNEDY



Westminster School: George Mangos (C), top; Jenny Haydock (Lab); Jonathan Monroe (LD)

Highbury Fields: Ananda Kelly (C), top; Louise Meade (Lab); Sirin Geemen (LD)

Laymer School: Thomas Ableman (C), top; Katherine Hardcastle (Lab); Charlotte Stone (LD)

'I take the Ken Clarke line. I'm very pro-EMU'

George Mangos, 17, who is standing for the Conservatives at Westminster School, a leading independent, lives with his family in Hampstead but has spent most of his life in Greece, where his father — who "started from a very working-class background" — is in shipping. Mangos is British, but says his political convictions "were forged when I was in Greece, a place where trades unions had, and still have, too much power. My family was always involved in the equivalent of the Conservative party."

He distrusts Tony Blair: "He's just too glossy, too shiny to be real. He also has these links with the trades unions which he tries to mask and which will resurface if he is elected."

Although pro-European — "I take the Ken Clarke line. I'm very, very pro-EMU. Nationalist blindness is preventing Britain from joining" — George does not believe in a federal Europe.

Who might lead the party if the Tories lose? "I would hate to see Redwood or Howard take over. I do not support the Criminal Justice Bill — though Jack Straw's no better. Conservatism is not fashionable at school. "I get a lot of flak. They think I'm old before my time. But there are a lot of hidden Tories at Westminster."

Ananda Kelly, 17, the Conservative candidate at Highbury Fields, the combined sixth forms of Highbury Fields girls' and Highbury Grove boys' comprehensives, is standing more with his head than his heart. The school is in a Labour heartland. "I guess," he says, "I'm the only person willing to stand for the Tories. I thought it's an opportunity to get involved."

The Lib Dems are more his taste. So how does he mask his lack of Tory conviction? "Basically we're on the offensive. One of the reasons I ran for

the Conservatives was the challenge. His family isn't political. His father, a teacher, is a Liberal. His mother, a reflexologist, abstains. He hasn't got any Tory idols: "I think John Major's a pretty cool bloke, he's quite witty. But I guess I don't actually admire him."

Definitely no Labour heroes. "I really don't like Tony Blair. I can't stand him. Very smug, smarmy smile. I think the Labour Party are prostituting themselves."

Kelly is more pro-Europe and pro-single currency than anti, but favours a referendum. His own campaign secret weapon is his mate Wesley, the school hunk. "I've persuaded him to wear blue swimming trunks on polling day. I guess that's exploitation, but we're facing an uphill struggle."

Thomas Ableman, 15, the youngest candidate in the elections at Laymer School, a grant-maintained grammar school. He is a true-blue Tory. "I've been interested in politics for years. I was writing essays about Margaret Thatcher when I was eight. So when I heard there was going to be an election, I volunteered."

Why Tory? "I'm a Conservative because I believe in Conservative ideals. I fully agree with the government line on Europe. I think the Government are right to wait and see before deciding on a single currency. I am pro-European. I admire Kenneth Clarke."

Does he have any dislikes of the current Conservative strategy? "I dislike a lot of the law and order policies that have been introduced recently. But generally I'd say I'm a staunch Conservative."

"The Labour party is absurd. Mr Blair has led an unprincipled dash for power. Mr Blair is someone who is willing to tailor his policies to get elected." His mother, he says, "is absolutely ashamed that I'm standing as a Tory. My father is undecided."

JOE JOSEPH

'Labour and the Tories are too close, and both steal from the Lib Dems'

Charlotte Stone, 18, of Westminster School, is a already veteran Liberal Democrat campaigner. "I joined when I was 16. I canvassed for the first time at the Ladbroke Grove and Saddleworth by-election, going round knocking on doors." Her father, a designer, once stood as a Liberal Democrat councillor and her mother, with whom

she lives in a council flat, is "a staunch Conservative. I don't look at the party's policies as in what will benefit my home life. I look at what I believe in."

"honesty." Tony Blair says education, education, education, but he is not willing to say it is so important they will ask for more tax for it."

Should selective schools like her own survive? "I am very grateful for the education I have received and I appreciate it. But I do agree

that grammar schools are not good for the majority of children."

Who will replace Paddy Ashdown, when the time comes? "I am not going to answer that. I admire him too much."

Jonathan Monroe, 16, has found time out from his seven A levels to campaign for the Liberal Democrats at Westminster School.

He is heir to a long Liberal tradition. "My dad's a card-carrying Liberal Democrat, my grandfather was a Liberal candidate in

Beckenham and my great-grandfather was a Liberal attorney-general."

Monroe, who lives with his parents in a north London semi, "has recently discovered new Labour does not tell the truth. What really blew it was when they said they would keep to Tory Treasury figures when they knew that meant cuts in health and education."

Education policies are another target. "Conservative policies on grammar schools would lead to a

secondary modern in every town and that would be unacceptable. Letting the existing grammar schools carry on is yet another example of Labour hypocrisy."

The most popular school campaign issue is legalisation of soft drugs. "My personal belief is that cannabis and Ecstasy should both be legalised and available at the chemists."

Sirin Geemen, 18, volunteered to be a Liberal Democrat candidate to help improve her knowledge of

politics, one of her four A levels at Highbury Fields. "I don't like any of the parties wholeheartedly but the Liberal Democrats are the best of a bad bunch."

She lives with her Turkish mother and brother in a council flat near the school. "I think the Labour Party have strayed too far towards the Tory Party and they are both stealing a lot of the Liberal Democrat policies."

Only the Lib Dems would make more people feel involved in de-

mocracy. "You could say voting in the election is a wasted vote because a lot of constituencies are safe seats. I agree with the PR system."

Does she criticise the decision by Tony Blair, Islington's most famous resident, to send his children across London to school? "There is only one Catholic school in Islington and he wanted the best for his child. I would want the same."

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Major asks faithful to trust him above party

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

JOHN MAJOR made an impassioned personal plea to party activists in Aberdeen yesterday to "look in my eyes" and trust him even if they have doubts about the Conservative Party.

The Prime Minister distanced himself from the problems facing his party and underlined his personal integrity and ability to protect Britain against European Federalists and the break up of the Union.

"I appeal to you. Don't let whatever doubts you may have had about the Conservative Party in the past weigh with you, when the future of the United Kingdom may be at stake. Think about it. Think seriously. Think again. Look in my eyes and know this. I will always deal fair and true by this great nation."

THE TORY CAMPAIGN

He attempted to emphasise his own stature at the head of the party when he made clear that the conservative manifesto "has my imprint right upon it. It is my manifesto, not just to my own constituents but to the whole of the country."

Mr Major has ordered colleagues to make devolution and Europe key issues in the final days of the election campaign, believing that this is Labour's most vulnerable territory.

In an interview with *The European* he talked tough about the gulf between the Tories and Labour on Europe, saying it was "not just a gap — it's a chasm". He added: "We did not enter the EU for socialism through the back door or for a federal Europe. We support Britain in Europe, not Britain run by Europe."

The British Prime Minister — whether himself or Tony Blair — would "face pressure to take Europe down an integrationist, federal path" when the heads of the European states met at the Amsterdam summit in June, he said.

"If Blair is elected to the premiership of May 1, within weeks he would go cap in hand to Amsterdam to sign away control over much of Britain's booming economy. The trade union bosses will bring through the back door all the powers we have pushed out through the front door."

Mr Major reiterated his determination to resist any move towards a more integrated Europe. "If the British people send me to Amsterdam, be in no doubt. I will not put British prosperity at risk. I will not put Britain on the escalator to a Federal Europe."

Mr Major launched a fresh attack on Labour's devolution proposals, linking the break up of the United Kingdom with a growing threat from European federalists in Brussels.

□ Labour's proposal to abolish tax relief on health insurance could increase the tax bill of 600,000 pensioners by £200 a year, the Tories warned yesterday in an escalation of the battle to win the so-called grey vote.

The Tories were accused of running scare stories to try to win over the pensioner population by Labour leaders who repeated their charge yesterday that a fifth-term Conservative government would privatise the state pension. But Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, defended the Tory tactics and said that Labour had made specific commitments which would raise costs for pensioners.



Tony Baldry, left, junior minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, talking to farmers at Hereford cattle market yesterday

Minister finds life tough on the farm

Damian Whitworth goes on the campaign trail with Douglas Hogg's deputy, Tony Baldry

THE man fighting the muckiest campaign of this election is probably Tony Baldry, a junior minister at the Ministry of Agriculture. While other ministers canvass voters in supermarkets and factories, Mr Baldry has been spending most of his time deep in manure.

In the absence of Douglas Hogg, Mr Baldry's boss, who admitted to *The Times* last week that he is only spending seven days on the national campaign trail, poor Mr Baldry is touring the shires seeing rather a lot of farmers.

While other ministers seem incapable of going anywhere without an escort from a huge retinue of minders, Mr Baldry quietly drives himself around from farm to market to fishing port. Yesterday he rolled up at Hereford market to launch the Conservative rural campaign.

He was ushered into the sheep pens by the happily named local Tory candidate, Sir Colin Shepherd. As those unfamiliar with the hazards



of such places slithered around and tried to mop up the mess with straw, Mr Baldry splashed on without regard to his turn-ups. "Your shoes take quite a battering in this job," he said. "But this isn't as bad as fish markets. At the crack of dawn, fish-markets really smell."

The minister told one farmer that the crisis over "mad cow" disease had been night-

mare for some people. A thousand bleats concurred. Mr Baldry then decided to start talking tough politics. This was perhaps a mistake. "Village life and rural traditions are under threat from Labour. Labour's policies would lead to the death of the rural economy." He attacked the idea of a minimum wage, railed against the Opposition's policy on hunting and

trumpeted the government's handling of the BSE crisis.

However hard Mr Baldry has worked, however many European Council of Ministers meetings he has attended — he is not a farmer. He trained as a barrister. Just as he concluded his spiel Labour's frontbench agricultural spokesman in the Lords, Lord Carter, appeared.

Lord Carter has not only

been Labour's spokesman on agriculture for a decade, he actually is a ruddy-faced farmer and an agriculture consultant. He was laughing and joking with the local chairman of the National Farmers' Union, Derek Wareham. "We once worked on the same farm together, 40 years ago," said Lord Carter.

Turning to Mr Baldry's pronouncements, Lord Carter remarked: "It seems a little inappropriate to come here and start talking about a minimum wage. Farmers about the only people who have got a minimum wage and they've had one for 50 years."

"Furthermore, it is a deliberate distortion to say that our right-to-roam Bill would give legal access to farmland as it will only refer to open land or moorland." Mr Baldry's boast that the Conservatives were best placed to get the beef ban lifted was similarly dismissed.

Mr Baldry had waded off to look at some cattle.

NFU chief will vote Labour over BSE

By ANDREW PIERCE

THE former president of the National Farmers' Union says in a letter to *The Times* today that he will vote Labour at the election for the first time in 40 years because the Tories had forfeited the right to support from farmers.

Sir Simon Gourlay says that the "disastrous" record of the Government was illustrated by the BSE crisis, the worst to afflict the industry since the war. Sir Simon, the president of the NFU from 1986-91, who has voted Tory in every election bar the last one, when he backed the Liberal Democrats, said that many land-owning farmers had switched to Labour because of the "lamentable" performance of Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister.

"Ineptitude and day-by-day crisis management over the last ten years have cost farmers and the taxpayer billions of pounds," he said.

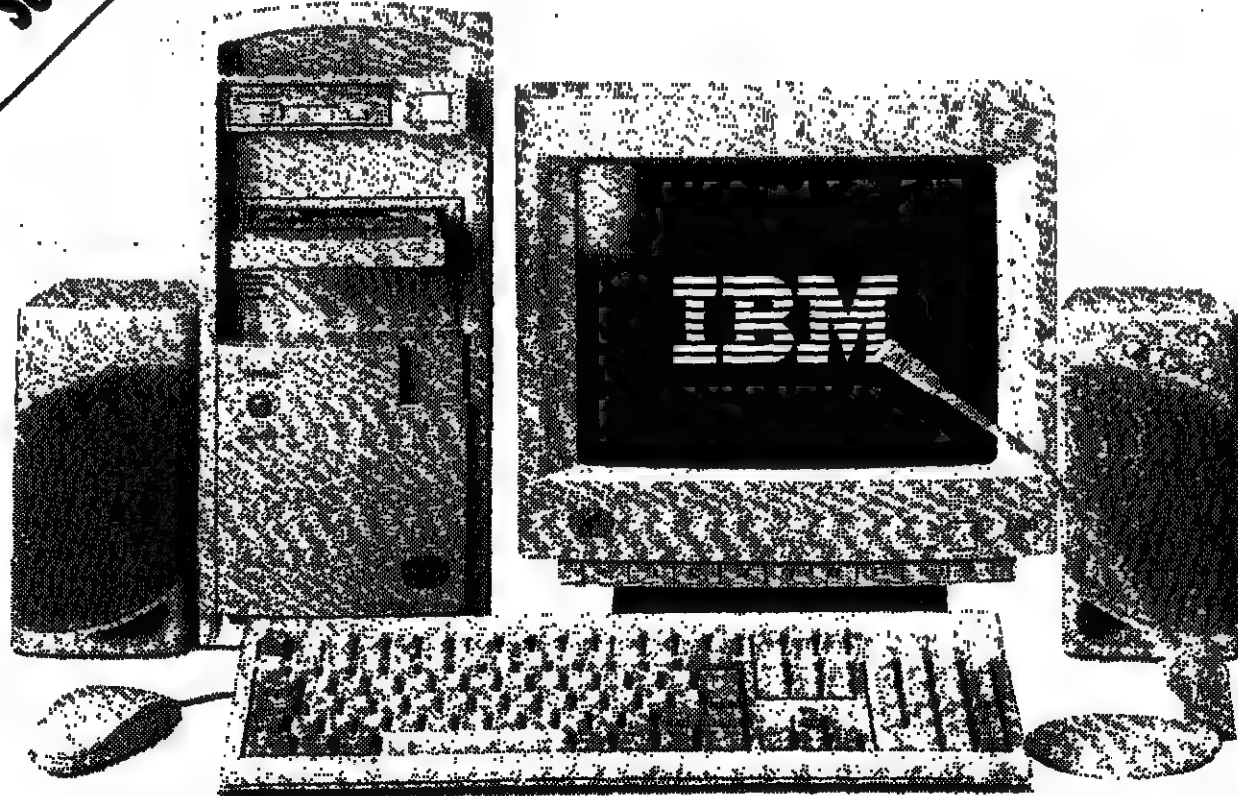
□ Alan Sugar, the chairman of the electronics firm Amstrad and Tottenham Hotspur Football Club last night declared his support for Labour. Once seen as one of Baroness Thatcher's favourite businessmen, he said Mr Blair was a breath of fresh air and understood business.

Letters, page 23



Gourlay: condemned handling of beef crisis

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Abbott runs for cover instead of for Parliament

"DIANE Abbott? She will be here tomorrow, but we don't know exactly where."

I had difficulty in tracking down the Hackney North & Stoke Newington Constituency Labour Party, who are not in the phone book, and now it seemed they had difficulty tracking down their candidate.

They promised to ring back. They never did. So I rang them again yesterday morning. "Her schedule does not allow anyone into her constituency today," they said, then hung up. So I asked *The Times* to ring. "She is not in the constituency, but may be later," the enquirer was told.

So I turned up at the door of her Stoke Newington office yesterday morning. Two party workers behind the counter looked sheepish. They paused.



I thought I saw someone move behind a screen. "Yes, she's here," one worker said, hesitantly.

Diane Abbott stepped forward.

I should explain that she and I are on good terms and she cannot have regarded me as hostile. She is known for her forthright left wing views and occasional eccentricity ("I don't even know Tony Blair: never had a conversation with

Matthew Parris tracks down but has great difficulty cornering a rare and fascinating species — the apparently publicity-shy politician

him" she said last year) but I am less likely than most to mock. She looked deeply embarrassed. "Sorry," she said, "you can't write about me today. I am off to help Alan Simpson, the Labour candidate in Nottingham South."

Could *The Times* photographer take a picture of us? "Sorry, no photographs."

"This was becoming unreal. I phoned Mr Simpson's office. "No, she is not coming here today. She's arriving tomorrow on the 11.45 train."

I do not see myself as a doorstepping journalist or wish to become a nuisance. I am at work but would be pleased to take us round later. For the Referendum Party, Brian Maxwell could join me the following morning. For the Rainbow Connection Dream Ticket Party, Lisa Lovebucket agreed to take an hour off work to meet *The Times*. She brought with her Dickon Tolson (None of the Above Party) on his bike.

We assembled outside the Labour Party offices. Inside, Diane Abbott was still refus-



Candidates Dickon Tolson, Lisa Lovebucket and Michael Lavender wait outside the Labour offices for their rival to make a break for it

ing to come out. From time to time people would peer from the windows to see if we were still waiting. I could see Miss Abbott behind the counter.

"She came to a Charter 88 meeting," the Liberal Democrat told me but when we asked her views, she said: "All I have to say is that Tony Blair walks on water."

"I am hoping for 23 votes," said Miss Lovebucket. "Not 24?" I asked. "No, 23. It's the number of the illuminati."

Her party ticket is "Home rule for everyone, everywhere". Mr Tolson, a 24-year-old extra in *Peak Practice*, has invested all

his savings in his deposit. He believes in individual freedom and human diversity and wants to take a stand against party politics. Mr Lavender thinks Labour has let Hackney down and hopes for a solid protest vote for the Tories next Thursday.

So *The Times* knows where Hackney's Rainbow, Conservative, and None of the Above, parties stand. But where does Labour stand? "All I have to say is that Tony Blair walks on water."

Diane Abbott had now been hiding for four hours. At about 4pm, they sent a decoy out —

an Abbott lookalike who leaped into a mini cab. But we know Diane and were not fooled. At 5 they sent a spy to scout the Rochester Castle pub, where I was writing this. But I hid. By 6 she was still within.

Your sketchwriter has reached four conclusions. First, Miss Lovebucket and Mr Tolson, who will lose their deposits, are a good deal saner than the Hackney Labour Party. Second, it looks like Labour's Millbank Tower is behind Miss Abbott's disappearance. But they had better at least co-ordinate official lies

— how about an 'alibi for the day' each morning? — so that we all agree when Miss Abbott is supposed to be arriving in Nottingham. Playing silly huggers is not clever, not even especially sinister: it is just stupid.

Third, if I were Diane Abbott, whom I persist in not disliking, I should feel insulted and humiliated. Humiliated that my party is ashamed — or afraid — of my face and opinions appearing in any journal outside Hackney. Oh — and fourthly: in Miss Abbott's memorable phrase "Tony Blair walks on water".



Diane Abbott: hid in her constituency office all day

Michael Foot goes trendily but with some passion into that good night

HE HAS a new claret jacket for new Labour. Michael Foot, on the campaign trail in west Wales yesterday, was doing his best to live up to the party's new designer image.

Gone was the donkey jacket, to be replaced by one of the more expensive casual labels for men. Gant. His footwear, dark canvas shoes by Artwalk, is favoured by trendy first-time new Labour voters.

The former Labour leader was extremely proud of his dress but even he thought purple would be too much. That is the colour chosen for Labour's election day

Valerie Elliott admires the former leader's commitment to designer fashion on his visit to west Wales

build-up. His shock of white hair, owl-like spectacles, wooden stick and Dizzy the Tibetan terrier, who has been a companion for 17 years, were reassuringly familiar. There were no soundbites from Dizzy but Mr Foot said he was getting on famously with Mr Blair's new bulldog.

The passion and emotion are still there. But Mr Foot, 83, the grand old man of the Labour movement, who held Ebbw Vale after Aneurin Bevan for nearly 50 years and in 1983 led the party to

its heaviest postwar defeat, is quieter now.

He sensed victory nevertheless for Labour this time and is convinced the party will be in power well into the millennium. He said he intends to be around to see what it achieves. Mr Foot particularly looks forward to seeing more women in the Cabinet and in Parliament. They would enliven politics, he said.

But the man of letters gave a warning in an address to students at Pembrokeshire College, Haver-

fordwest, that the only combination for a winning politician was to mix political theory with practical measures. He hinted that perhaps the pragmatism had gone too far. "Some politicians should learn more from our history than sometimes they are prepared to do."

Later on a nostalgic journey to the Boathouse at Laugharne, once Dylan Thomas's home, flashes of Michael Foot's former fiery spirit emerged. There were firm orders for a Blair government. "They

must call an international conference for the abolition of the bomb. I think they will do. It's not in the programme but there are lots of things not in the programme they might wish to do," he said.

"Now I am not saying they should give up the bomb when others haven't but they should call the conference, we must call a halt to this race. The more they look at it the more they will come to this conclusion."

The next priority was to get people back to work. "The unions

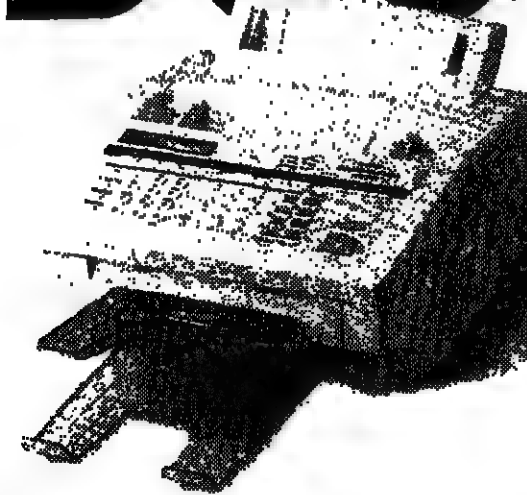
will help Tony Blair win this election and they will help him on this afterwards."

Mr Foot's third demand was the state funding of political parties. He railed against the secret funding of the Tories but said trade union sponsorship of MPs was defensible because it was open. "I do believe Labour will introduce it. You won't solve real corruption in Parliament without state fundings. There are mixed views on this in the party but I think they will do it."



Foot: grand old man of Labour movement

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What really new ideas are being offered by the two main parties?

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What are the top ten new ideas?

TORY	LABOUR
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2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10

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Soapy stagecraft takes the gloss off plans to channel draw's £1bn profits to 'people's causes'

Labour's credit rating falls as its lottery banker fails to hit jackpot



You'll be sure of a big surprise, they said. But Charles Bremner found Tony Blair lost in the woods as new Labour's theatrical presentation held centre stage

WE were in for a big surprise. Labour had promised us when we were invited down to a riverside television theatre in London yesterday. The media bunker of Labour's daily press conferences was not special enough for the exciting news to be unveiled by Tony Blair and his friends.

What we saw was the launch of Labour's promised plan for revamping the National Lottery and reallocating modest proceeds to health and education. Sorry, that should read "We shared in the excitement of Labour's promised 'billion-pound jackpot for all Britain'". This event, according to Mr Blair, "will be as important as well as popular as any initiative taken by any political party in the course of this campaign".

Putting aside what this said about the importance of projects for government, Labour's lottery day offered a fine example of the soapy stagecraft which has driven the campaign, and especially new Labour's. It was also a nice primer in the buzzwords that are supposed to hit the

right buttons for mall-shopping, leisure-loving Britain.

Labour's lottery wheeze might be defined by a French intellectual as *Le Mardisme Light*. Any old leftie would recognise the principles behind what it calls "the people's lottery". The idea is to take wealth and redistribute it to "the people's causes". The business is a painless exercise in which we are all winners. It involves no confiscation or taxes, but simply what Mr Blair called the "fun" of buying lottery tickets. A couple of wicked capitalists were, however, cited by Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Heritage Secretary: the over-rich Camelot "monopoly" and the Churchill family. The latter had, according to Labour, unjustly benefited from the people's millions to keep Sir Winston's papers in Britain.

Based on the rule that nothing is real unless it is on television, Labour had put on an implausible affair that came across like one of those "info-mercials" broadcast in the small hours on American television. There, before the darkened theatre, was a stage set as dazzling as the teeth and the white shirt of the chief compere, Tony B. There was an enthusiastic studio audience, drawn from the public, and a bevy of guest stars who came to endorse the product.

In the absence of Mystic Meg, Mr Cunningham warmed up the audience while Tony B beamed into the theatre darkness from behind the traditional vase of red roses. Bounding to the podium in best Trust-Me mode, the party chief then assured a hall dominated by election-weary hacks: "Labour can't guarantee that you'll win! Though we've been sorely tempted to make that guarantee... But



Labour

Roll up: Miriam Stoppard said advice on healthy living must be as popular as this week's in-store super-buy

we will guarantee your money goes to causes you care about."

In near-verb-free flight, Mr Blair warmed to his theme. "The People's Lottery. It will not substitute for what the taxpayer does. It will add to what people get." Literate and numerate children would be merrily clicking away on computers, sharpening their skills at "homework clubs" and honing their healthy lifestyles. This would be financed by the profits from the midweek draw, £1 billion within four years, a sum that would in reality spread pretty thin. But

you didn't just have to take the politician's word: celebrities backed it. First came Steve Cram, the athlete, who appeared on a video screen standing in the duty-free shop at Heathrow. He was rushing off but wanted to give his blessing to after-school clubs.

Then, in a coup for Labour, Anthony Minghella, the director of *The English Patient*, stepped up from the studio audience to read a speech in praise of Labour's planned National Endowment for Science and the Arts, another lottery cause. His Oscar-winning film had earned \$175 mil-

lion (£107 million) so far for the American producers. Labour would make sure this kind of money would come to Britain, he argued.

The finale came from "TV's Dr Miriam Stoppard", who, in the new soft-left idiom, sang the praises of Labour's plans for "healthy living centres". These would "deliver health into the hands of the people". Advice on healthy living must become "as attractive as this week's super buy", she added.

The details of how this paradise would be financed were left to the imagination. Determined to offer more

pictures to ram home the "gamble for health" theme, Mr Blair was bussed to a modern one-stop health centre in Brentwood, west London. No one had apparently warned Kay Clark, 37, who had her mouth open in mid-examination when the Labour leader glided up to her dental chair. He seemed to have forgotten the well-body maintenance message and all Dr Stoppard's stuff about "taking health out of the context of illness".

"The dentist is my friend, but a friend I don't want to see very often," he quipped.

LABOUR'S LOTTERY

Labour yesterday promised £1 billion to be spent from money raised by the Wednesday-night lottery on at least four areas: health, education, training, and a new endowment trust for the arts and science. Tony Blair made clear that none of the projects would be given money for more than five years, and that most of the money would go in capital start-up costs rather than revenue. He said that

several other areas could be covered within the money raised and that the four projects were only illustrative. Party aides said that after lottery funding was withdrawn from projects, business or voluntary partnerships would take over. Labour's plans may require the creation of a new body to allocate funds and a further change to the rules on how the lottery money is distributed.

HOMEWORK CLUBS

After-school homework clubs for 50 per cent of secondary schools and a quarter of all primary schools within five years. Academic studies have found that after-school homework clubs, which would receive £150 million of lottery money under Labour's plans, help pupils to achieve better results. A dozen schools are sharing a government grant of

£60,000 in a pilot project on after-school clubs. Labour's plan would concentrate on inner-city "action zones" where results are poor. Schools and voluntary organisations could bid for start-up support for clubs. Teachers' leaders welcomed the plan, but gave warning that they would hold Labour to its promise not to use lottery money as a substitute for state funding.

IT TRAINING

Training 500,000 teachers in information technology. This technology is central to Labour's commitment to revitalise state schools. Lottery money would be used to provide equipment and to update teachers' skills. Proceeds from the midweek lottery will provide £100 million to set up a "national grid for learning" through the Internet, as well as a teacher-training pro-

gramme in information technology. Inspectors' reports have shown that many teachers lack the confidence to make full use of technology. Labour is promising training in information technology for existing teachers before the end of the decade to "clear the skills backlog once and for all". All new recruits to the profession would have to qualify in the subject.

HEALTHY LIVING CENTRES

Healthy living centres — a core network of health and fitness centres by 2001. Labour wants to build on joint initiatives between GPs and local health or leisure centres. The new centres would offer fitness checks, fitness routines, and advice on diet and leading a healthy way of life. Labour says some of the services would be provided free but suggests that charges could be intro-

duced in some areas. The centres would be easily accessible, in areas such as shopping centres and leisure centres. Some people would be referred to specialists, but the aim would be to reduce pressure on the NHS and promote healthier living. Bids would be managed under the auspices of Labour's proposed local commissioning groups of GPs.

SCIENCE AND ARTS

A National Endowment for Science and the Arts (Nesta): An endowment fund is envisaged to promote artists and develop inventions. The charity

would invite leading artists and scientists to contribute part of the value of copyrights and patents to help new talent. There would be a boost from the lottery.

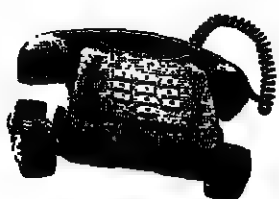
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Ring up Gordon Brown? At least half the voters have better things to do, writes Peter Barnard

Phone-in political debates are a men-only pursuit

WOULD a latter-day Emmeline Pankhurst have gone to jail and started hunger strikes for the right to ring up Gordon Brown? Or is there a great divide between the genders over suffrage, whereby women just want to get on with the voting while men, the election anoraks, love to believe they are part of the debate?

Yesterday's Election Call on BBC1 and Radio 4 brought about a sensational departure from the norm: four women rang up Mr Brown, the Shadow Chancellor. This is less than 25 per cent of the 17 people who called in, yet it is still a sharp swing to women compared with Election Call as a whole, which has taken about two calls from women out of an average of 16 callers to each programme.

Nor is the imbalance confined to the electorate. By the time Election Call ends next Wednesday, there will have been 16 politicians in the studio hot seat. Of those only one, Margaret Beckett for Labour, is a woman. No Gillian Shephard, no Harriet



Harriet Harman, Virginia Bottomley, Gillian Shephard and Clare Short have been absent from Election Call

Harman, no Clare Short, no Virginia Bottomley.

Party panic explains some of these absences. Mrs Bottomley and Ms Short having been banished by the media manipulators for the duration. They would need to throw themselves under a horse to get a mention, much less a role, on the mainstream election programmes.

The result is that Election

Call and others of its kind have consisted of men telephoning men. Yesterday 13 men telephoned Mr Brown, in dark suit, plain shirt and red tie and Mr Brown stayed "on message" throughout. It was pretty boring and it was very male.

En route from the television set in the office I conducted some research, consulting a random sample

of women consisting of my wife, MORI it ain't, but a few minutes later a note appeared on my desk: "I am interested in what people do, not what people say. They all have so much to say and we all have so much to do."

The "we" means women. From the tone of their questions. It can be presumed that most of the men who called Mr Brown have jobs and

were therefore speaking from their places of work. Men tend to consider ringing up politicians from work — a responsible use of time, for are we not better workers for being "well-informed"?

A dubious proposition, especially when put to women who, while Election Call is on the air, are completing school runs, rushing to work or dashing home to organise

the builders. Gordon Brown reckoning the Labour manifesto, which is what occurred for 55 minutes yesterday, has so take its (low) place on a woman's list of priorities.

So are men more in tune with the issues in this election than women? I seriously doubt it. Men, women and election programmes have a relationship which parallels that between men, women and cars. Men like to stick their heads under the bonnet on a regular basis whereas women only care about what a car does, not how it does it.

Men like to poke about in the entrails of politics, ringing up the likes of Mr Brown so that they can feel part of the political process. But the truth is that the modern political engine is as much a mystery to men as is the modern car engine.

Women simply accept this. Men like to drag oily answers from politicians for the same reason that they like to commune with an oily car: they are none the wiser, but they do it because it seems manly. What a grand conclusion.



Emmeline Pankhurst: would she be motivated by the desire to join a telephone debate?

Women are 'missing from TV coverage'

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

MALE politicians, journalists and pundits are dominating television coverage of the general election, and women's concerns are being ignored, according to a study published today.

Despite the main parties' efforts to increase the number of female candidates and to appeal to female voters, the Fawcett Society found that women were "almost invisible" in the coverage.

The study of television news between April 4 and April 10 found that male politicians (excluding the three main

male colleagues, who, for instance, conduct the big interviews with party leaders.

It said that on BBC's Nine O'Clock News Arne Perkins appeared every night but that her reports tended to concentrate on the lighter side of the campaign rather than serious analysis of the issues.

The report said that while it was true that television news was often reacting to events and using the individuals put forward by the parties, more considered features failed to take account of women. In a BBC report looking at the influence of European Union on southwest England, "as so often with items of employment, women did not appear," the report says.

Helien Garner, of the Fawcett Society, which was set up in 1866 to advance the cause of women, said: "The programmes do not reflect women's true role in society."

The report says: "To date, the news coverage has been dominated by men, male politicians, male reporters, male presenters, male experts, male academics and male professionals. Women's specific concerns are rarely highlighted and the framing of discussions on issue of general interest has only included the token input or presence of women."

THE MEDIA

party leaders) appeared 127 times compared with eight appearances by women, and that 20 per cent of election news items were covered by female journalists compared with 80 per cent by men. Fifty men appeared because of their professional or business interests but only four women. No female academic experts appeared compared with 17 appearances by male academics. BBC1 news, ITV news, BBC2's Newsnight and Channel 4 News were monitored. The report says that women journalists are often given less prominence or status than

Results programme to be BBC's longest

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE BBC is to broadcast the longest programme in its 75-year history on election night, with eight hours of results, comment and analysis.

The BBC1 programme, which will be two hours longer than the Corporation's previous election night special, will use 80 outside broadcast units and cost £2.5 million.

David Dimbleby, Peter Snow and Jeremy Paxman will be among the presenters, and Kate Adie and John Simpson, both more used to covering wars, will report from key marginals. The programme will open at 9.55pm with the results of an exit poll of 16,000 voters.

Peter Snow's perennial "swingometer" has been transformed into a computer-generated wheel. He has also helped to devise a battleground map that may show majorities in individual constituencies exploding into thin air.

Although ITN is putting up fierce competition with a programme presented by Jonathan Dimbleby, the BBC can expect the bigger the audience because viewers traditionally turn to it for big events.

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Blast rocked football-playing gunmen after electronic signal sent message of freedom for hostages

Sound of martial music heralded doom for rebels

By GABRIELLA GAMINI, SOUTH AMERICA CORRESPONDENT, AND MICHAEL EVANS

AN ELECTRONIC signal received by a member of the Peruvian security forces held hostage inside the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima gave a vital warning that a military operation to lift the 120-day siege was about to be launched.

The sound of the Peruvian Marines' official anthem from loudspeakers set up around the mansion provided confirmation to the rest of the hostages that the attack was imminent.

The 72 hostages, mostly held on the first floor of the residence in separate rooms, were told to lie on the floor. Forty-five of the hostages were high-ranking members of the Peruvian security forces.

Eight of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement guerrillas, including their leader, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, were relaxing on the ground floor, playing football in the grand reception hall which had been converted into a makeshift pitch. The remaining six guerrillas were on guard duty on the stairs leading up to the first floor.

Cerpa and his three top lieutenants were fighting the inaction and boredom with a game of close-quarter football with four other Tupac Amaru guerrillas. They were relaxed as the afternoon sun beat down on the mansion. The 40-

THE RESCUE

minute storming of the residence by 140 Peruvian special forces' commandos and police began with a huge explosion underneath the hall where the guerrillas were playing football. Engineers had dug a tunnel right across the compound and under the main building. The explosion beneath the feet of the football-

6 We heard the Marines' anthem played on loudspeakers and knew it was time

guerrillas provided the single most dramatic element of surprise vital for the operation's success.

The pre-planned warning signal to the hostages was another element of the months of planning that guaranteed the final victory.

One report said coded messages had also been sent to the hostages via letters from relatives delivered to them daily

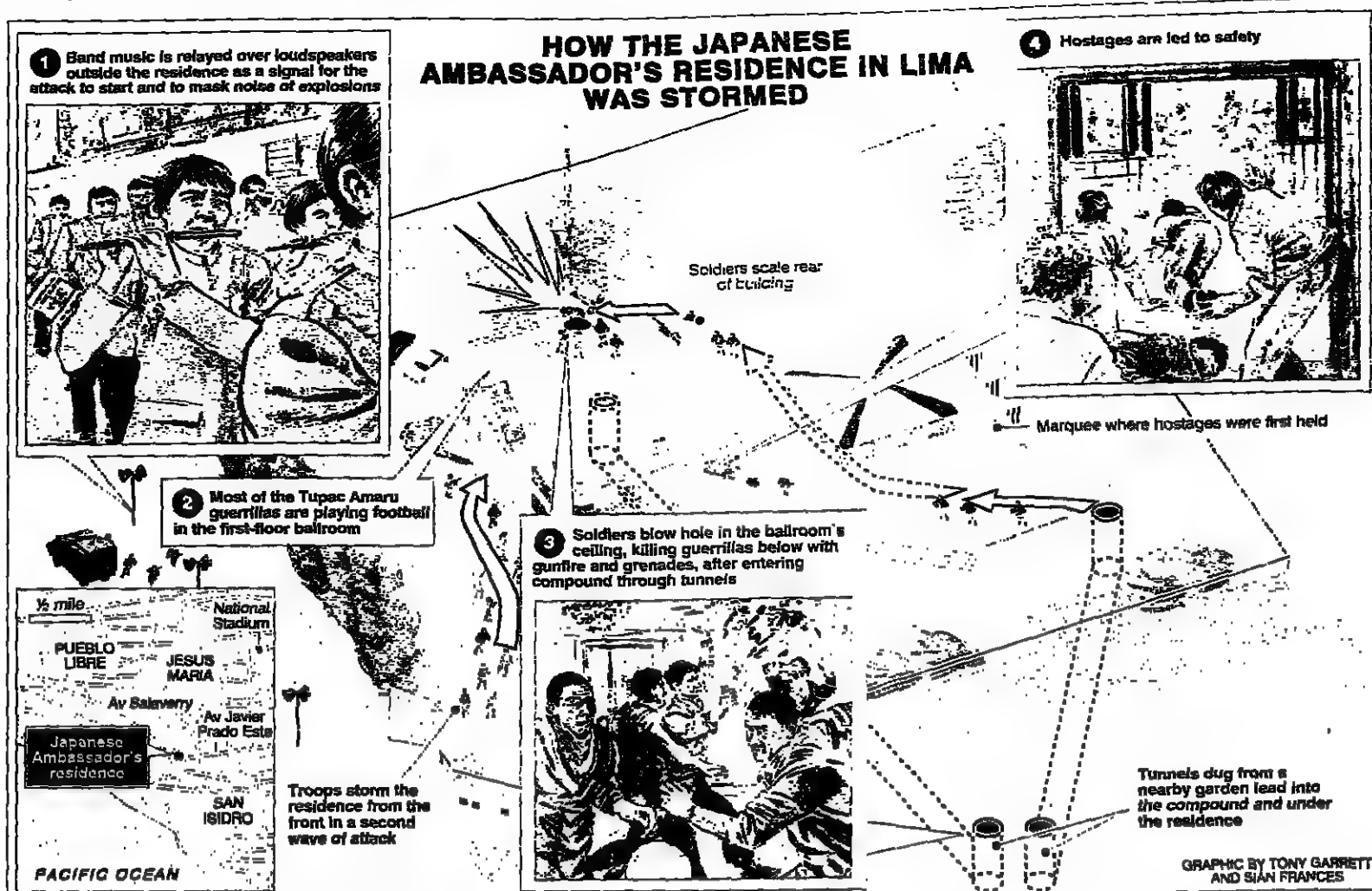
by the International Committee of the Red Cross, warning of a possible commando raid.

The Peruvian special forces took over a remote area on the outskirts of Lima and built a mock-up of the mansion, a method used successfully by the SAS in breaking sieges. The Peruvians called their mission Operation Chavin de Huantar, the name of a pre-Inca civilisation in central Peru known for its adoration of the puma.

The Peruvian security authorities had time to devise a strategy aimed at attacking the residence from every angle, including from beneath the building. This was the most daring part of the plan.

Several tunnels were dug across the compound to the residence. To cover the noise of the drilling machines, the Peruvians played deafening military music.

As the weeks went by, special detectors, listening devices and thermal imaging equipment provided by the Americans, including the most advanced surveillance systems used by the CIA, helped to pinpoint the location of the 14 guerrillas and the 72 hostages, who, after the release of most of the 300 original captives, were split into three separate groups. All the conversations inside the



GRAPHIC BY TONY GARRETT AND SAN FRANCISCO

Britain's hidden persuaders kept the guerrillas talking

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

NEGOTIATORS

FOUR Metropolitan Police officers played their part in devising special negotiating tactics that helped to dissuade the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement guerrillas inside the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima from killing hostages.

The murder of captives early in the siege would have forced the Peruvian Government to launch a military operation without proper planning, with the likelihood of substantial casualties. The negotiations were a vital element of the counter-siege strategy.

Official negotiations with the guerrillas began four weeks after the Japanese envoy's residence was seized on the night of December 17-18. The hostage-takers agreed on January 16 to send a represen-

tative to attend meetings of a special commission of five negotiators. The five included Domingo Palermo, the Peruvian Education Minister, who headed the commission.

The four Metropolitan Police hostage negotiators, on rotating duty to ensure two were always present in Lima, were available to give advice to John Illman, the British Ambassador, and to the Japanese Government. None of the British officers took part in the actual negotiating.

The commission of five negotiators met a member of the hostage-takers in a house a block from the ambassador's residence. The guerrilla was driven out of the compound in an armoured vehicle and taken to the house which was heavily guarded. After each set of negotiations, he

was driven back to the compound.

The commission of negotiators had two principal objectives: to prevent the murder of any of the hostages and to try to end the siege through peaceful means. From years of experience dealing with hostage-takers, the Metropolitan Police experts were on hand to advise on well-tried negotiating methods, based on winning the confidence and trust of the guerrillas.

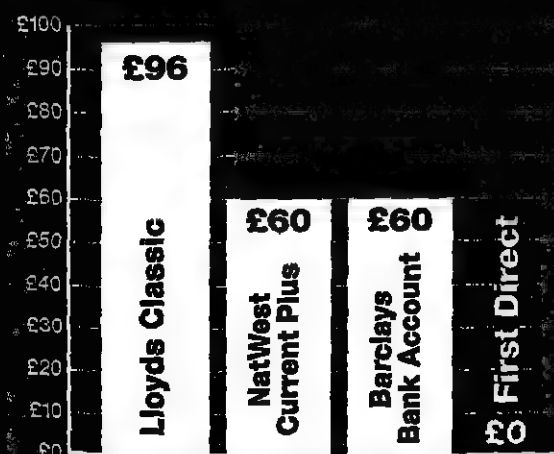
By the time the siege was ended, the two Metropolitan Police officers who had first flown to Lima to give their advice were back in Peru for their next stint of duty. They knew that the negotiations with the guerrillas had played a substantial part because the hostage-takers had been deceived into thinking that the Peruvian Government would never authorise a storming of the residence.



A Peruvian special forces soldier peers out of a hole in the grounds of the Japanese Ambassador's residence before the assault to free the hostages

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Amid coup rumours, calculating leader revives political fortunes with lethal blow to terrorists

President salvages iron-man image in dramatic flourish

FROM DAVID ADAMS
IN MIAMI

WHAT began as a nightmare for President Fujimori of Peru ended in the kind of high drama that political leaders can only dream about.

With a microphone in one hand and a walkie-talkie in the other, a beaming Señor Fujimori—shirt-sleeves rolled up under a black bulletproof vest—was on the scene less than an hour after Peruvian troops launched their assault on the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima.

The man who likes to call himself the "President-manager" was seen directing troops as if he had planned the attack himself. But the success of Tuesday's storming of the diplomatic compound—all but one of the 72 hostages survived—was almost as much about rescuing Señor Fujimori's political career as it was about bringing the hostages out alive.

"Talk about public relations," said Eduardo Gamara, a political scientist. "This guy is going to be President as long as he wants to now," he said, referring to Señor Fujimori's controversial efforts to change the constitution to seek a third term.

Tuesday's events were in stark contrast to the scene around the diplomatic compound during the previous 126 days. Rocked by political scandal at home, on the eve of Tuesday's assault, Señor Fujimori's Government was in disarray. But the President's response was typical of what analysts describe as his cold decisiveness in moments of crisis. But even for Señor Fujimori—a mathematician by training—this was a decision loaded with monumental risks, both personal and political. Among the hostages was his brother.

As the crisis entered its fifth month, critics blamed Señor Fujimori's intransigence for a deadlock in negotiations with the hostage-takers.

An opinion poll showed the President's support had fallen

FUJIMORI

to 38 per cent of the population, down from 70 per cent before the hostage-taking. The successful end to the hostage crisis "is a tremendous boost for him," said Señor Gamara. "After this his popularity is going to be 100 per cent."

Señor Fujimori, 59, is no stranger to crises. In 1992 he seized near-dictatorial powers by dismissing the legislature and the courts with the backing of the military. He justified the seizure as necessary to control corruption and combat the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) rebels.

Within months, his Government had imprisoned most guerrilla leaders and begun to take credit for a decline in violence. But human rights groups accused the authorities of a wave of repression. When Tupac Amaru rebels captured hundreds of hostages at a



Fujimori keeps in touch at the Lima siege scene

Japanese embassy cocktail party on December 17, it was a spectacular setback for the President who boasted that crushing the guerrillas had been "a piece of cake".

The United States strongly urged Señor Fujimori not to comply with rebel demands to release hundreds of their jailed comrades. But the strong-willed President was also facing pressure from Japan, a close ally which urged Señor Fujimori to seek a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the stalemate.

Time began to run out for the President. In the past two weeks, the Peruvian Army had been shaken by political and human rights scandals to the point that there were widespread rumours of a military coup in the making.

The resignations at the weekend of the Interior Minister and the chief of police indicated sharp political differences over how to resolve the hostage crisis. The President's shadowy chief security adviser became the target of embarrassing corruption allegations. The army was also involved in a scandal stemming from the murder of a female intelligence officer whose body was found dismembered, apparently after being tortured to death by fellow officers. Admitting abuses had taken place, the army sacked several officers.

But the events on Tuesday proved again that Señor Fujimori is never more dangerous than when in a corner. The successful end of the crisis has effectively silenced his critics for the time being.

However, the hostage crisis has severely dented investor confidence in Peru as an emerging market. Surviving leaders of the Tupac Amaru rebel movement have pledged to step up actions against economic targets in revenge for their comrades' deaths.

But the rebels remain a small group and, while the violent end to the siege may inspire new recruits, others may be less willing to cross swords with Señor Fujimori.



Peruvian soldiers celebrate their successful storming of the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima, ending the 126-day deadlock after Tupac Amaru rebels took over the building during a cocktail party last December

Japanese firms were set to pay ransom

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT
IN TOKYO

JAPANESE companies were preparing a multi-million dollar ransom in the hope of buying freedom for the hostages before the siege was ended.

Some corporations believed they could secure the release of their executives by paying the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. President Fujimori hinted in February that money may have been paid early in the crisis, but the Japanese Government says it has no knowledge of payments.

Experts say that the ransom plan, whether implemented or not, reflects the Japanese habit of making deals with terrorists, and presents a stark contrast to the resolve shown by President Fujimori, who is of Japanese ancestry.

Japan, which persistently sought a peaceful settlement of the crisis, was caught off guard by the rescue. Ryutaro

TOKYO

Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, admitted yesterday. "Unfortunately we were not told of the operation in advance," he said. Mr Hashimoto was asleep when Peruvian troops made their move. "I regret this, but we thank the Peruvian authorities for seizing the opportunity."

After the operation, Mr Hashimoto spoke to Mr Fujimori by telephone and was told the Lima Government could not have given a warning because of the "delicate timing". "I told him I understood his choice, but I did inform him of my regret that we had no prior information," Mr Hashimoto told journalists.

Voicing the feelings of many Japanese yesterday, Hideaki Kase, a former government adviser, said the resolution of the crisis without consulting Tokyo was "humiliating for Japan... This affair will only perpetuate Japan's image as a country lacking a will to resist terrorists."

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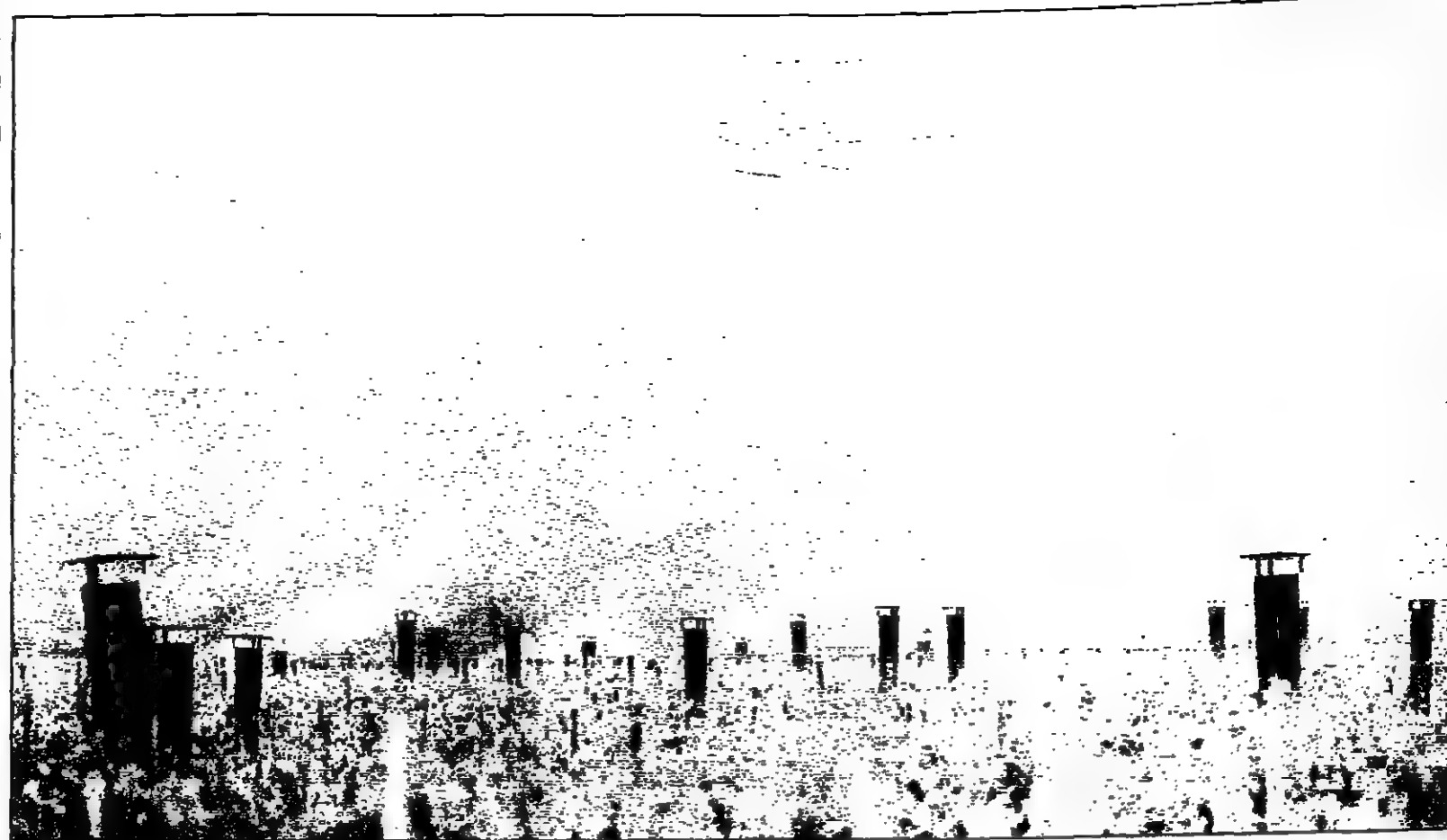


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A HELICOPTER keeps smoke from about 100 heaters close to the ground at a Graves vineyard near Bordeaux. A sudden freeze has hit grapes and threatened this year's harvest in the region. Problems of a different nature are being experienced by South African wine farmers who

Heat on to save chilled vines

were warned yesterday that they would go on an export blacklist if they continued using the "tot" system, in which labourers are given wine instead of cash. The warning came

from Lourens Jonker, the chairman of the KWV (Co-operative Wine Farmers Association) at its annual meeting in Paarl, in Western Cape province. The tot system has been

outlawed since 1963, but Mr Jonker said it was still in operation on more than half the estates and wine farms ten years ago. He said that the system was now run by less than 1 per cent of wine producers but that KWV would support any future prosecutions over breaches of the law.

Paris poll campaign tainted by sleaze

By ADAM SAGE

SLEAZE dominated the French parliamentary election campaign yesterday amid reports that the Government wants to give amnesty to corrupt politicians and claims of ballot-rigging in Paris.

The allegations are likely to fuel the electorate's scepticism underlined by an opinion poll published yesterday. Voters condemned President Chirac's decision to call an early election but said they would return the Gaullist-led Government because they had even less faith in the Socialists.

An overwhelming majority said M Chirac's move was a political manoeuvre and a sign that his policies had failed. They did not believe living standards would improve if Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister, were re-elected.

However, the Socialist Party, which lost office in 1993 after repeated scandals and an amnesty for political corruption had outraged the electorate, is still not seen as fit to govern. The poll found the Government would win a majority of about 50 seats in the National Assembly.

The sleaze allegations levelled against the Socialists damaged the image of the entire French political class. That reputation sunk a little lower yesterday with suggestions that M Juppé is also planning an amnesty. Under French law, business leaders can be charged with misusing corporate funds if they make illegal donations to political parties. The politicians who receive the money can also be prosecuted. Press reports yesterday said the Prime Minister wants to abolish this offence, backdating the legislation.

The reports said senior figures in the centre-right majority, including some who worked for M Chirac when he was Mayor of Paris, are under investigation and would benefit from the amnesty. M Juppé strongly denied the reports.

Le Canard Enchaîné, the satirical weekly, said yesterday that Jean Tiberi, M Chirac's Gaullist successor as Mayor of Paris, had "rigged" the electoral roll in his constituency to include up to 4,000 supporters who lived elsewhere. M Tiberi denied any wrongdoing, saying: "Many voters wish to continue to vote in a district to which they are attached".

French spy faces treason trial

FROM ADAM SAGE
IN PARIS

A FRENCH scientist has been charged with treason after admitting he supplied top-secret documents on his country's nuclear test programme to the KGB.

Francis Temperville, 38, was committed for trial this autumn at a hearing in Paris last month which was not reported. The case has been described by an investigating magistrate as the most important spy scandal in France since the Second World War.

The defendant's lawyer says the affair underlines serious faults in security procedures at France's Atomic Energy Commission, where M Temperville worked in 1989 and 1990. He is accused of delivering 6,000 highly confidential documents on nuclear tests in the South Pacific to two senior figures at the Soviet Embassy in Paris. He continued to meet the agents after the Soviet Union's fall in 1991.

Cigarette packets and rose petals were signals for betrayal by nuclear scientist

M Temperville has been in custody for five years. He was arrested after Viktor Ochenko, the former KGB agent, defected in London in 1992 and informed the British secret service of Soviet espionage operations in Europe.

"Temperville was not an ideologist and not a militant," said his lawyer, Maître Jean-Didier Belot, who claims his client was ensnared by the Soviet agents.

M Temperville accepts that he supplied documents in return for cash, but maintains he did not know the spies worked for the Soviet Union. He says that when he tried to break off contact with them they threatened to kill him. He also says the information he supplied was less important

than the prosecution claims. M Temperville's confession to the investigating magistrate, Roger Le Loire, reads like a far-fetched novel. Contacted by a high-ranking Soviet Embassy official, Sergei Smyrev — alias Serge — when he was studying nuclear physics at university, M Temperville was "activated" when he got a job at the Atomic Energy Commission.

Employed in the commission's Directorate of Military Affairs, he was able to copy the documents on the secretary's photocopy, take them away in a plastic bag and place them next to an electricity pylon in Paris.

He signalled the "delivery" by dropping orange peel 100 yards away. If a pack of

Dunhill cigarettes appeared at the same spot half an hour later, the documents had been collected. If Serge or his colleague at the embassy, Valentin Makarov — alias René — wanted to contact M Temperville, they left rose petals by a Seine bridge.

After M Temperville's arrest, four Russian diplomats were expelled from France because of their attempts to continue to exploit M Temperville, who left the Atomic Energy Commission in 1990. At the time the case was described as an embarrassment to Russia, which was attempting to build relations with the West.

However, the five-year investigation by M Le Loire has revealed flaws in French

counter-espionage operations that make it just as embarrassing for the French authorities, according to Maître Belot.

"The Atomic Energy Commission was a sieve," he said, questioning procedures that allowed M Temperville to be employed in a sensitive area and walk away with confidential material without ever being checked.

According to the prosecution, the defendant supplied the KGB with information on nuclear tests at Mururoa atoll between 1979 and 1990.

M Temperville will be one of only a handful of people to be tried for treason in France this century. He faces up to 15 years in jail and a heavy fine. **Paris protest:** Police detained nine demonstrators who placed what they said was radioactive earth outside the National Assembly in Paris. They chained themselves to the four containers and unrolled a banner reading: "Let's get out of nuclear." (Reuters)

Brussels sees only Italy and Greece missing euro goal

FROM MICHAEL DYNES IN BRUSSELS

THIRTEEN European Union countries, including Britain, are on course to meet the key economic target for participation in the European single currency when it is due to be launched in 1999, leaving only Italy and Greece out in the cold, the European Commission announced yesterday.

Painting a rosy picture of the prospects for the single currency, the Commission said that all 13 countries should have reduced their annual public deficits to less than 3 per cent of gross domestic product, thereby meeting the main economic criteria set by the Maastricht treaty.

The Commission's annual spring forecasts predicted that Germany and France, the economic powerhouses of economic and monetary union, will just meet the criteria this year, with public deficits of exactly 3 per cent of GDP. Similarly, Spain and Portugal would squeeze past the 3 per cent mark, while Britain's public deficit is forecast at 2.9 per cent.

The forecasts brought alarming news for Italy, one of the countries most eager to be in the first wave of single currency members. Brussels predicted that it would have a 3.2 per cent public deficit for this year, which will fuel existing fears of a conspiracy among German bankers to delay the participation of Rome in the single-currency experiment.

Although the Commission said that there was a fair chance Italy would be able to meet the 3 per cent target by next year, when the decision will be made on who joins the first wave, the forecasts nonetheless implied that this was unlikely.

Publication of the Commission's forecasts, which independent financial analysts insist are drafted under political pressure, were delayed for more than an hour because of a protracted debate among the commissioners. It is understood that Emma Bonino, the Italian Commissioner, was fu-

rious over the Commission's pessimistic view on Italy.

Dismissing suggestions that the Commission had massaged the figures to put the best possible gloss on the prospects for the single currency, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the Economic and Financial Affairs Commissioner, said he believed "that a majority of member states will meet the requirements for participation in the euro".

Asked how it was possible for Germany and France to meet the 3 per cent target when other international forecasters, including the International Monetary Fund, had predicted they would have public deficits in excess of 3 per cent, M de Silguy insisted: "There is absolutely no question of any sort of trading or tinkering with the figures."

Defending the integrity of the Commission's forecasts against a barrage of hostile questioning, M de Silguy said "any government can cry, moan, roll on the ground or whatever. It seems to me that the first duty of the Commission is to safeguard the credibility of the Commission and its departments" from political pressure.

M de Silguy also said that any postponement of the single currency would be legally and practically impossible, because any delay to the 1999 timetable would precipitate legal action from large banks and businesses which have invested billions in preparation for monetary union.

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Crimean prostitutes to retreat from Nato

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

IT MAY only be a crumb of comfort for President Yeltsin in his flagging campaign against the expansion of Nato, but at least he can count on the patriotism of members of the oldest profession.

Prostitutes in the Russian-majority Crimea region of Ukraine have declared that they will withhold their services from Nato sailors taking part in the Sea Breeze exercises off the coast of Crimea this summer.

The prostitutes, who were taking part in a rally in the port of Sevastopol to mark Russia Day, the commemoration of Catherine the Great's incorporation of Crimea into Russia in the 18th century, announced their intentions to Krymskoye Vremya, a local newspaper.

"Let them obtain services from the wives of the officers who let Nato ships into the Black Sea," the newspaper quoted one as saying. "We for our part will shower the unwelcome guests with tomatoes and rotten eggs."

Russia has rejected an invitation to join Nato and Ukraine in the exercises, which Moscow views as a provocation in the light of the still unresolved dispute over the division of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet. The issue has been a stumbling block in Russian-Ukrainian ties since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Yeltsin seals deal with Beijing to thwart America

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

RUSSIA and China served notice on the West yesterday that they will co-ordinate foreign policy in an attempt to challenge America's domination of global politics.

In a move triggered by Moscow's anger over Nato expansion and Beijing's strained relations with Washington on human rights, the two rivals signed a joint declaration, formally putting aside differences and committing themselves to a partnership into the next century.

This meeting is of paramount importance, and may be of historic importance in shaping the destiny of the 21st century," said President Yeltsin, before signing the document with his Chinese counterpart, Jiang Zemin.

Although the Russian leader is prone to grandiose statements, the declaration could signal a turning point in post-Cold War relations. The two nations are now committed to

challenging the West on everything from United Nations peacekeeping operations to world trade.

In particular, the document rejected "the attempt at enlarging and strengthening military blocs". It called for a "multipolar" instead of a "bipolar" system to resolve world problems, denouncing what it described as "Cold War mentality" and "hegemony".

While no third country or military alliance was named in the document, its wording left little doubt that the thrust of the new partnership was to contain America's dominant role in global affairs and Nato's eastward expansion. The two could have a significant impact on the handling of international crises, such as peacekeeping operations and sanctions, if they co-ordinate their efforts at the UN, where each holds a permanent Security Council seat.

The move has been widely

welcomed from a broad political cross-section in Russia, including Communists and reformists, who have grown increasingly frustrated by Nato's decision to enlarge its membership and override Moscow's concerns. While China's needs are less pressing, Beijing has apparently calculated that, in the long term, sound relations with Moscow can work only to its advantage in dealing with a hostile West.

"The West has only itself to blame for the renaissance of Sino-Russian relations," said Aleksandr Yakovlev, a China expert at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Moscow. "This could have been avoided if the West had been prepared to discuss global problems in a more even-handed way."

Yesterday's Kremlin ceremony symbolised the shift in Moscow's strategic thinking. Before and after the collapse of Communism, Russia looked to the West for political, economic and cultural models to shape its society. However, the experiment in democracy and the free market has been only partially successful and a growing number of strategists have urged the leadership to turn to China and Asia for inspiration.

Much of this policy shift was masterminded by Yevgeni Primakov, the former intelligence chief who became Foreign Minister more than a year ago. He has strengthened Russia's relations with India, Iran, China and the Arab states in a clear break with the Western-oriented policies of Andrei Kozyrev, his predecessor.



Japanese flags mingled with the Union Jack as kindergarten pupils welcomed David Wright, the British Ambassador to Japan, and his wife, Sally, to the opening of the

Shakespeare goes east

Shakespeare Country Park in Maruyama-machi, central Japan. Behind the children

is a model of the home of Mary Arden, William Shakespeare's mother. The

theme park features many highlights of European history and culture. Yesterday was the anniversary of both the writer's birth, in 1564, and death in 1616.

China 'used US tools to build fighters'

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

CHINA illegally sent advanced imported technology to a military base to help to build missiles and fighter aircraft, according to a crime investigation by the US Government.

The year-long inquiry studied documents and satellite photographs suggesting that China intended to use the equipment for military purposes despite promises to the United States that it was for civilian use, said intelligence officials quoted in *The New York Times*.

The criminal inquiry by the US Attorney's Office and the Customs Service threatens to add to the tension between Washington and Beijing. Democrats and Republicans in Congress are stepping up pressure on the White House to harden its stance towards China, even at the expense of exports. To the Chinese Government's irritation, President Clinton yesterday "dropped by" at a meeting between the Dalai Lama and Vice-President Al Gore, the fourth time he had met Tibet's spiritual leader.

The deal investigated by the federal inquiry is the 1994 purchase by Catic, a

state-owned Chinese corporation, of equipment to fashion large parts for aircraft from McDonnell Douglas. Officials close to the inquiry say that some equipment sent from America was taken not to Beijing, as Catic had promised, but to a military base of Nanchang Aircraft, 800 miles away to the north.

McDonnell Douglas discovered the diversion in 1995 and reported it to the Commerce Department. Records from Catic's southern California subsidiary have been subpoenaed, according to administration officials, but the inquiry is still at an early stage.



President Yeltsin greets Jiang Zemin in the Kremlin

Debts force Pakistan to sell off 13 firms

BY CHRISTOPHER THOMAS, SOUTH ASIA CORRESPONDENT

PAKISTAN, struggling to repay a crippling foreign debt, plans to privatise 13 state-owned companies, including big electrical and gas holdings. Several banks and small factories will also be sold, marking a radical change of direction forced more by necessity than ideology.

The Government reportedly plans to cut bureaucracy by 200,000 jobs. That would put it in the forefront of South Asian nations attempting to streamline their economies and abandon a traditional commitment to socialism and state enterprise. More than 30 per cent of government spending in Pakistan goes on defence and another 40 per cent

on loan repayments, leaving little for education, hospitals and roads. It is believed 99 per cent of Pakistanis dodge taxes.

Among companies Pakistan plans to sell are Karachi Electric Supply Corporation and Sui Northern Gas Pipeline. The Government hopes to raise more than 14 billion rupees (£208 million) in the next year. Officials said the sales must go ahead to provide a cash infusion to avoid defaulting on repayments of its \$19 billion external debt due this year.

Fatimah Shah, a Hong Kong Shanghai Bank economist in Islamabad, said corruption and mismanagement could scare off investors.

WORLD SUMMARY

Neo-Nazi guilty of murder bid

Johannesburg: The neo-Nazi leader, Eugene Terre'Blanche, stormed out of a court at Potchefstroom, west of here, yesterday after being convicted of attempted murder and assaulting a black man with intent to do grievous bodily harm, denouncing the judgment as "political" and saying: "Today the war has started" (Tringo Gilmore writes). But when threatened with arrest, Terre'Blanche returned to the courtroom. He was remanded on bail until June 17, when he faces a possible maximum sentence of ten years' jail.

Zaire slaughter

Lula, Zaire: Zairean villagers said rebels slaughtered hundreds of Rwandan refugees at a camp south of Kinsangani in revenge for the killing of six villagers. Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, denied the reports. He said his men intervened to stop fighting between villagers and Hutu refugees. The Kasene camps have been sealed off from aid workers and journalists. (Reuters)

Inquiry grows

Washington: The Whitewater investigation into the business affairs of President Clinton, his wife Hillary and former business colleagues has been extended by six months (Bronwen Maddox writes). Kenneth Starr, the special prosecutor appointed to investigate the tangle of financial dealings in Arkansas, said he had "extensive" evidence of obstruction of justice.

Israeli campaign

Jerusalem: Prominent Israeli lawyers and writers are leading a campaign to demand a full public inquiry into corruption allegations against Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, and other senior government figures (Ross Dunn writes). Michael Den-Yair, a former Attorney-General, said a senior judge should head a commission to uncover the whole truth about the claims or "the public will lose faith in the Government".

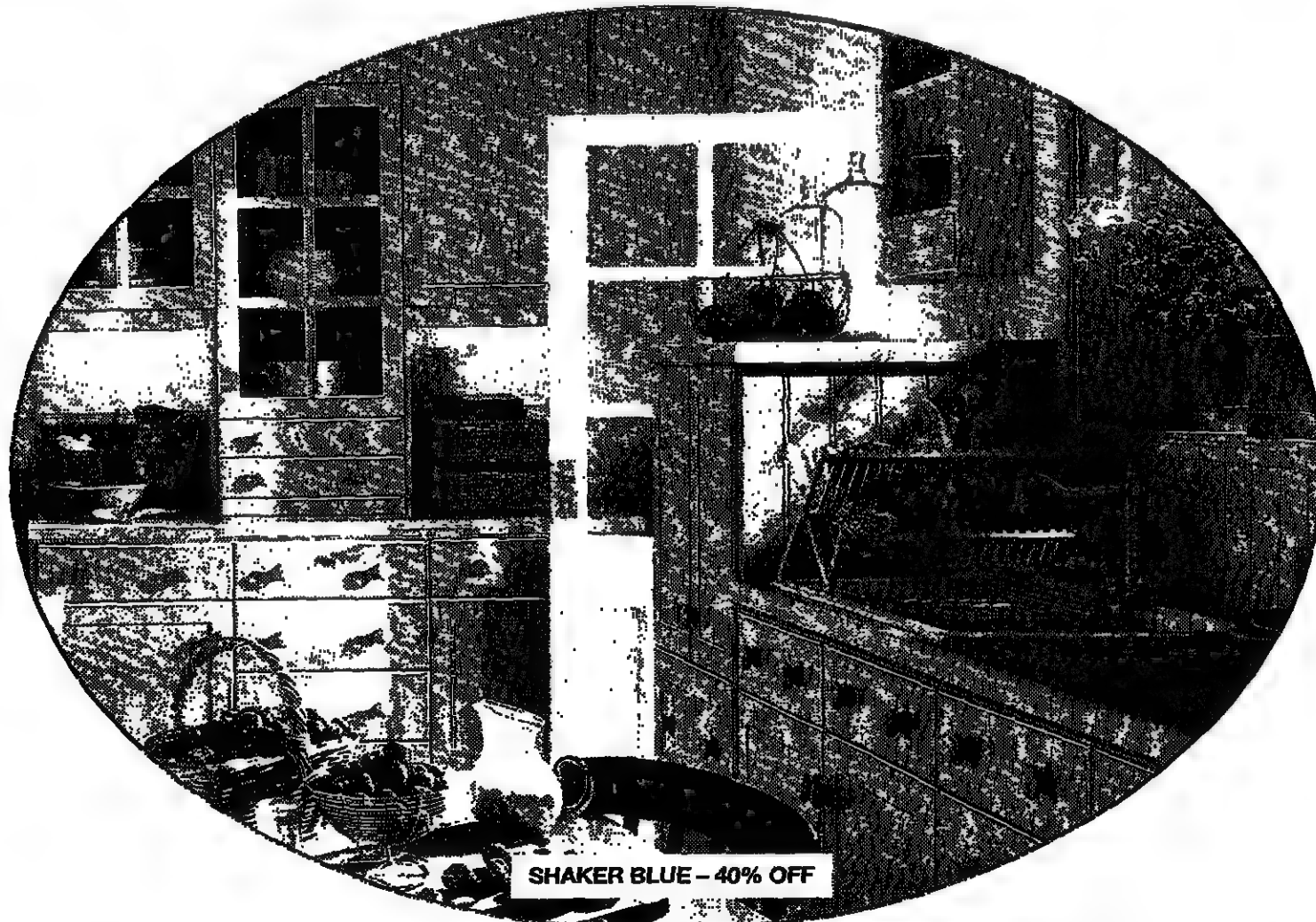
Jumbo blunder

Johannesburg: Kruger National Park has scrapped a birth control project for female elephants, after it caused them to have heightened sex appeal, a newspaper report said here. Elephant cows implanted with oestrogen hormones to prevent conception were left permanently on heat. (AFP)

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Dr Thomas Stuttford on why drugs should be tried before a hysterectomy; the danger of bathing in rivers; anger and the risk of a heart attack; an advance in treating an eye problem

When a woman has the right to say no

Many women who suffer from heavy periods (menorrhagia) may have been unnecessarily alarmed this week by press reports about the management of their condition. A committee of gynaecologists which investigated the approach of general practitioners to menorrhagia was pleased to find that more than 50 per cent of doctors thought that surgery should always be considered a last resort. The younger the doctors, the more likely they were to recommend drug therapy first.

The committee was, however, surprised to discover that nearly one doctor in ten thought that a hysterectomy was the best routine treatment for women who had heavy periods — provided that they had completed their families. Early hysterectomy may have long-term ill effects on the cardiovascular system and can be a cause of osteoporosis.

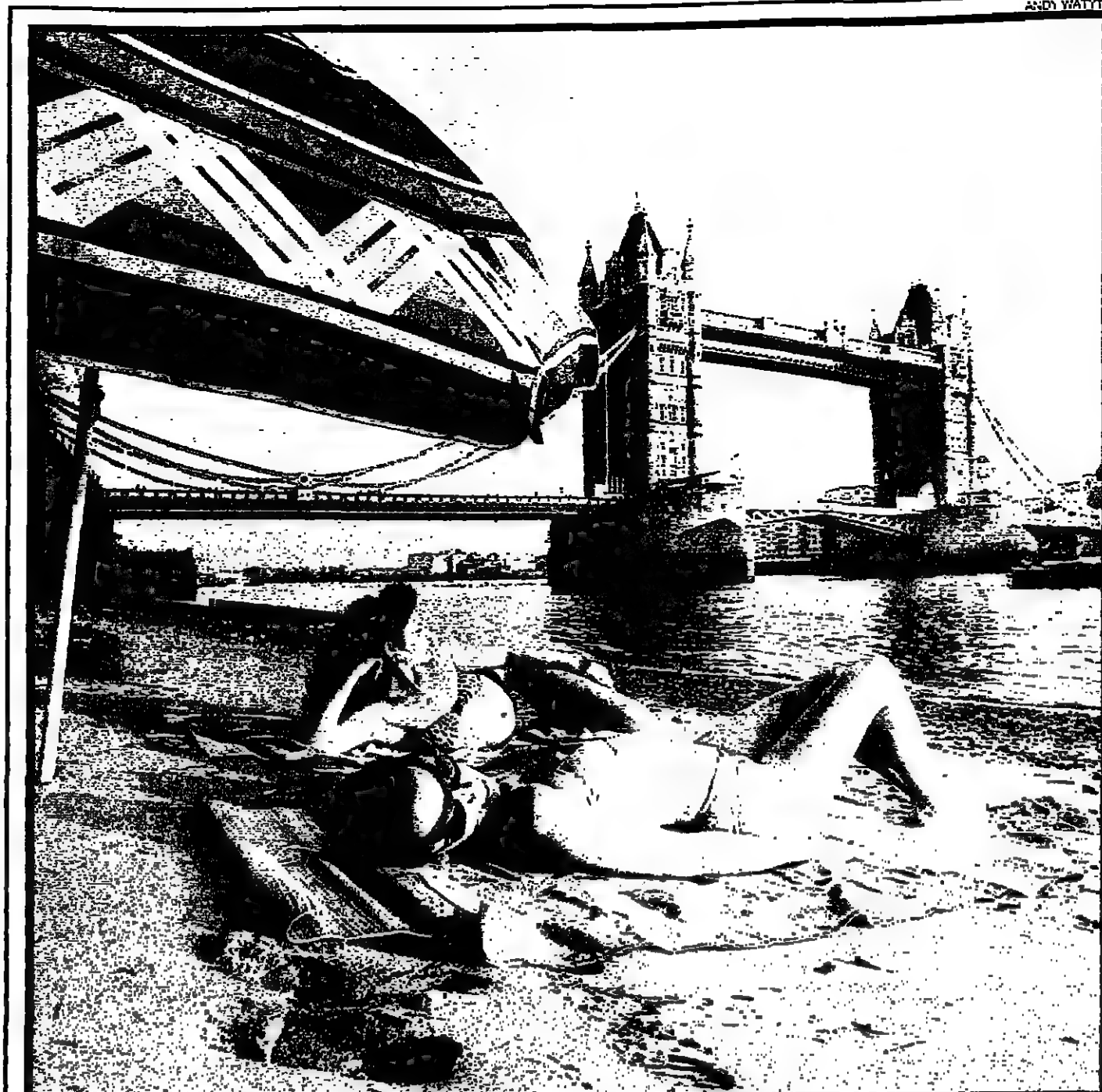
A precise definition of menorrhagia is difficult, since what may be heavy blood loss to one woman is quite bearable to another. The average woman loses about 60ml (12 teaspoons) of blood each month and most patients will consult their doctor only if what is the normal amount for them has increased by more than 50 per cent. If the bleeding is too heavy, or too prolonged, the woman will in time become anaemic, and even the most detached doctor will realise that something is amiss. Any woman who complains of heavy menstrual bleed-

ing should have a blood count and haemoglobin estimation so that the extent of her problem may be evaluated. Heavy bleeding tends to occur at both ends of a woman's reproductive life.

Although hormonal imbalance is blamed for most cases of heavy periods, they can also be the result of specific gynaecological troubles such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids, polyps or pelvic infection. It is striking how many women who complain of heavy periods in a gynaecological clinic have pelvic inflammatory disease, and how the symptoms disappear once the infection has been cleared. Fibroids can, but do not always, cause heavy bleeding. A standard textbook, *Gynaecology*, edited by Professor Robert Shaw, Mr Patrick Scutter and Professor Stuart Stanton, suggests that more than half the women who have bleeding at least four times their average loss will have a fibroid.

A DNC is often suggested in cases of unexplained heavy bleeding but the purpose is diagnostic, not curative. It is reassuring for women under the age of 40 to know that not more than one in ten thousand of them will have a cancer of the uterine lining, although by the time of the menopause, the figure may be as high as one in a hundred.

One of the most common causes of heavy periods is the intra-uterine contraceptive device, the coil. Excessive bleeding may also be a sign of unrelated medical problems. It



Lazy days: but think twice before diving into sluggish rivers to cool off as conditions are ripe for the spread of Weil's disease

Why a cool dip can leave a nasty legacy

THE days when wives could be relied on to do as they were told is long over. There is, however, one doctor's wife who must now wish that she had listened to her husband and not dived into the Thames for a swim after a jolly lunch.

Even before the effects of the present low rainfall were apparent, the Thames had been becoming more shallow and sluggish, ideal conditions for contamination with animal urine — including that of rats — and hence the organisms that cause Weil's disease.

The initial symptoms of the disease are headache, red eyes, muscular aches and pains and a high, intermittent fever. About four or five days after the onset of these symptoms, many patients develop jaundice and kidney failure, together with spontaneous bleeding into the skin and other organs. Younger people have a 5 per cent mortality rate, but this is higher in the over-sixties. Most patients make a full recovery.

Weil's can upset the immune system. Even after the organisms have been cleared from the body, it is possible for patients to develop a transient aseptic meningitis, a peripheral neuropathy, inflamed joints and uveitis (inflammation of the inner eye).

The doctor's wife developed the rarest of complications and immunological response, causing changes in her thyroid function which has proved hard to control.

is always worthwhile for a doctor to check thyroid function and many patients with Cushing's disease, an abnormality of the supra-renal gland, are diagnosed in the gynaecological clinic, as are those who have defects in their blood clotting systems.

In most cases, heavy periods have no easily recognisable cause but are the result of abnormalities in hormonal balance. Bleeding in the cases where there is an imbalance is described as dysfunctional uterine bleeding. The committee studied the drugs prescribed by doctors and was concerned that 69 per cent of them relied heavily on the use of a progestin preparation, which in many cases has no effect and helps comparatively few women.

Conversely, the combined contraceptive pill is effective in reducing bleeding in 40 to 50 per cent of cases but has well-known side effects which become important once the patient is over 35. Danol, danazol, reduces bleeding in nearly 70 per cent of women, but the majority have side-effects, which in some cases make it unacceptable. Non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs are also regularly used: the favourite is Ponstan, mefenamic acid, which helps 20 to 40 per cent of women. A drug of choice might well be Cyklokapron, tranexamic acid.

What the committee has shown is that neither doctors nor their patients should accept hysterectomy or endometrial ablation until the possibilities of drug therapy have been thoroughly investigated.

So angry you could die

Stories of road rage continue to make newspaper headlines. Disturbing and sometimes dangerous as those outrages are, few would wish the perpetrator to die, but research shows that this could be their fate. The premature death of those people who suffer rage or inappropriate rage can be the result of a heart attack.

A study in *Circulation* by Dr Ichiro Kawachi and his team at the Harvard School of Public Health has explored the detrimental effect of anger (not, of course, necessarily road rage) on the coronary arteries. The research makes salutary reading for all those who are tempted to shout at inattentive waiters, officious parking-meter attendants or the ditherings of a slow but careful driver.

The study of the effects of anger on the heart shows that those who are easily incited to inappropriate rage are twice as likely to have heart disease as their contemporaries who are more laid back.

The risk of a coronary thrombosis, whether fatal or not, was still apparent even when allowance was made for other known risk factors such as blood pressure and raised blood fats, such as cholesterol and triglycerides.

There are some signs in the physical appearance of the person given to rage which should alert the slow but

careful driver to the need to lock the door when a motorist jumps out of his car to remonstrate. People who are likely to suffer from dangerous levels of anger, whether to themselves or others, tend to be younger and heavier. They also tend to smoke and drink to excess.



Rage like this is dangerous

A report on anger and its effect on health shows that it is not the average, grumpy old man who has an appreciably increased risk of a coronary. The anger which kills is, in the words of the report's authors, the type which makes the person "feel like exploding, or so constantly grouchy and irritable that they are liable to attack furniture or other people".

The advice to those who go

through life suffering from a temperament which, like a volcano, may explode at any moment, is to learn to control their feelings. This may seem a hopeless project, but in a controlled group psychotherapy reduced feelings of anger by 60 per cent over 14 months. As the hostility decreased, so did the attacks of angina in those patients who also had heart disease.

The same teams of psychotherapists also found that teaching angry people with heart disease to feel more kindly about their fellows reduced by more than 50 per cent the chance that they would have a second heart attack.

Of all the characteristics of personality associated with heart disease, it wasn't grinding ambition, competitiveness, greed or even selfishness which was dangerous. The important one was anger. Some of the success of beta-blockers in reducing the incidence of coronary heart disease may well be related to their ability in converting a type-A personality, who is aggressive, into a type-B person, who is accepting and detached.

The term "road rage" is unfortunate as it implies that it is a specific and quite distinct complaint. It is not a diagnosis, but an indication for investigation.

New cure for an ill wind

BLOATING, the uncomfortable swelling of the abdomen after a no more than reasonably good meal, can be very painful and embarrassing. Bloating may be the symptom of irritable bowel syndrome but in many cases is due to nothing more complex than the collection of thousands of small bubbles in the stomach.

The makers of Rennie, the indigestion tablet, are now marketing Rennie Deflatine which they claim eases the discomfort of bloating provided that the cause is a simple dietary one. Rennie Deflatine contains an anti-foaming agent Simethicone, which breaks down all the tiny bubbles to form one large one, which can then be burped away, discreetly and silently.

Treating glaucoma

WHEN George Harrison, a civil engineer, left Heathrow for a posting to the Far East, his wife looked lovingly into his grey-brown eyes and reminded him to use the new eyedrops for his glaucoma.

Glaucoma is a condition in which an increase in the pressure of fluid within the eyeball may obstruct blood supply to the optic nerve, causing progressive blindness.

When the civil engineer returned for his first long leave, he took his wife out for dinner. She again stared into his eyes and had a shock — they had changed colour to dark brown. Mr Harrison had been using a novel form of

eyedrop. Xalatan reduces eye pressure by increasing the outflow of the fluid, rather than restricting its production as other drops do. It is prescribed for patients with the open-angle type of glaucoma.

To be most effective, Xalatan should only be used once a day, whereas other eyedrops for glaucoma had to be inserted twice daily. And most importantly, it does not have the side-effects associated with beta-blocker eyedrops.

The fascinating side effect of Xalatan is that about one in six patients finds that their eyes turn dark brown. So far as is known, this is only of cosmetic importance.

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Tighten belts for Brown's June Budget

Tim Congdon expects tax rises, loose money and sterling crises

When the Conservatives came to power in 1979 they had a clear and distinctive macro-economic programme: to reduce inflation by controlling the quantity of money. When Labour comes to power a week tomorrow (as seems almost certain), no one — perhaps not even Tony Blair and Gordon Brown — will be entirely sure about its macro-economic intentions.

The Labour leaders say they would maintain the present Government's inflation target, to keep the annual increase in the retail price index below 2½ per cent. But by itself this amounts merely to a declaration against sin. No guidance has been given about the controversial choice between different methods of inflation control.

The crucial issue is whether Labour wants to control inflation by basing policy on domestic economic variables or by targeting the exchange rate. A focus on domestic variables could be either highly pragmatic, with policymakers "looking at everything" before deciding interest rates, or dogmatic, based on an almost exclusive focus on the quantity of money (so-called "monetarism") or on some other variable. Since sterling's expulsion from the exchange-rate mechanism in 1992, policy has been based on domestic variables, and has been very much at the pragmatic end of the spectrum.

Nothing in the past background of the current Labour leaders suggests much interest in "isms", with perhaps two exceptions. First, if Mr Brown can be accused of any "ism", it is mild and vague Euro-enthusiasm. A reasonable assumption is that he will want to preserve parts of the pragmatic, look-at-everything approach to policymaking of the past five years, but to add a European dimension.

He may wish to rejoin the exchange-rate mechanism. Membership could be presented as a friendly overture to eventual participation in monetary union. The immediate difficulty would be to determine the right exchange rate at which to rejoin the mechanism. Much of the discussion about the virtues of a "low" or "high" rate wrongly credits governments with the ability to determine exchange rates. In practice, the government would have to accept the rate at the time of the entry — wars, misalignment, and all.

Of course, a newly-elected Labour government might try to manipulate the rate for a few months before fixing a figure for ERM purposes. The pound currently stands at roughly 2.80 marks and \$1.60; it is more than 15 per cent higher in trade-weighted terms than it was last summer; indeed, it is more expensive against most of the world currencies than during the last period of ERM membership. Against this background, there are no prizes for guessing where Labour would like the pound to go.

Mr Brown would of course want the pound to fall. Exchange-rate depreciation would suit the trade unions, because it would enhance their ability to press for higher

wage claims, and it would pander to Labour's prejudices in favour of manufacturing exports and investment. It would also be in accordance with the bulk of the advice that Labour is likely to receive from most British economists.

Mr Brown has already said that he would like his first Budget to come soon after the election. The obvious strategy would be to combine a tight fiscal policy with a loose monetary policy. The tight fiscal policy would be designed to dampen the current boomlet in consumption and the housing market, while the main expression of a loose monetary policy would be the low interest rates needed to deter the foreign investors in sterling.

What, precisely, would a "tight fiscal policy" mean? Here the Labour leaders' second "ism" becomes relevant. Over the past few years, left-inclined thinkers have complained that British industry suffers from "short-termism". This has never been properly defined; the idea is not based on a substantial and coherent body of thought, and it may amount to little more than a fad. Nevertheless, a critique of short-termism will be as much an intellectual theme of Labour's early Budgets as monetarism was in the Budgets of 1979 and 1980.

In particular, Mr Brown seems likely to discourage the growth of dividends (which go to the City) and to encourage the retention of profits (which "help long-term investment"). The Labour manifesto says that the present system of taxing company profits and capital gains ought to be reviewed. A possible measure is to halve the present rate of advance corporation tax. This would hit pension funds quite badly, but for most members of the general public it would be invisible.

I combined with a windfall tax on the utilities and the probable abolition of tax relief on mortgage interest, this would increase taxes by more than £5 billion a year. (The windfall tax would presumably fall in this fiscal year; the other tax changes would start to produce revenue next year and thereafter.) Moreover, Mr Brown could cut the deficit by these means, while respecting all of Labour's pledges to leave the standard rates of personal tax unchanged.

But mild Euro-enthusiasm and a critique of short-termism cannot in themselves establish a strikingly new economic policy. At an intellectual level they are so meagre and marginal as scarcely to challenge the existing macro-economic framework. The serious danger under Labour is that most members of the new Cabinet will be so seduced by "Europe" and "the euro" that monetary policy will again become centred on the exchange rate. Squabbles about the "right" exchange rate, and rows about the timing of and need for devaluation, might then disfigure the new Labour administration, as they did the Wilson Government of 1964-70 and the Wilson-Callaghan Government of 1974-79.



DOZENS OF HOSTAGES HELD FOR MONTHS IN FIGHT-TO-THE-DEATH...

How to vote sceptically

A Euro-doubter can't trust Major or Blair — but look at the parties

How should a Eurosceptic vote? The question, I suspect, is even harder in France than it is here, though I think some anti-fascist French Eurosceptics may find themselves voting for Lionel Jospin as the least of some very disturbing evils. One has first to ask what one means by Euroscepticism. I include pro-European like myself who opposed the exchange-rate mechanism and Maastricht and are strongly against the single currency, as well as those of more extreme views who would like Britain to withdraw to a Norwegian or Swiss role outside the EU.

The Referendum Party is right to argue that this is the most important issue of the 1997 election. Every other policy will be reversible. If the electorate does not like the result of electing a particular party in terms of taxation, health or education, there will be a chance to turn the next government out in five years' time and to change that policy. If Britain agrees to enter the single currency, or to further extensions of majority voting, there will not be a second chance. At best, Britain could eventually be forced to leave the EU altogether; at worst, Britain would become one of the moderately influential states of a United States of Europe, a sort of European Massachusetts. The Referendum Party's greatest contribution to the debate has been to persuade many people that Europe is the decisive issue.

However, the Referendum Party is a party not of government but of protest. It is not going to win the election, and would not be able to govern if it did. The great danger from a Eurosceptic's point of view is that it will draw off a few vital votes from Eurosceptic candidates and help to elect candidates who will go along with the single currency. Plainly the Referendum Party should not be opposing David Heathcoat Amory in Wales; he resigned as a minister because he believed there was a need to renegotiate the European settlement. The Referendum Party should have supported all the Eurosceptic sitting members; its failure to do so is a further reason to rule it out as the most effective vote in most constituencies. The UK Independence Party is open to the same objection. Where there is a Eurosceptic candidate from a major party with reasonable support, Eurosceptic voters should give him their vote, however much sympathy they may

have for the motives of the two small Eurosceptic parties.

One can rule out the Liberal Democrats. Though Paddy Ashdown says that he is opposed to the creation of a European superstate, the Liberal Democrats are in favour of the single currency, which is one of the foundations of such a state. They profess not to want a United States of Europe, but are happy to go ever further down the road which can only lead to that result. The same willingness to accept the next stage of the advance to federalism is to be found in the SNP. No one who values the independence of Scotland, or indeed of Britain, can vote for either of these two parties without the risk of giving it away. Their influence could be particularly dangerous if there were a hung Parliament.

The question therefore comes down to a choice between the two main parties. Each has adopted the same, inadequate policy towards the single currency of "negotiate and decide" (or "wait and see"). This is unsatisfactory because it implies that one could choose a single currency on purely economic grounds, without taking a giant step towards the single European state. That is not true. It is certain that the motivations of the Franco-German architects of the single currency have been and are political rather than purely economic. No Eurosceptic, however moderate, ought to accept the "wait and see" policy. This constitutes a deliberate political decision by both the major parties to keep open the single currency option which every Eurosceptic must want to see closed. To that extent it is offensive to be asked to vote for either party, when neither is willing to make a frank decision.

It is also hard to be asked to vote for John Major, at least in European terms. He took Britain into the exchange-rate mechanism, which did great economic damage before we were forced out. He signed the Maastricht treaty, failed to publish it through Parliament without a referendum, and has consistently refused to rule

out British entry into a single currency. No Eurosceptic can be happy about that record. He even gave us Jacques Santer as President of the Commission. The Prime Minister's European record is one of the substantive reasons why the Conservatives are still so far behind in the polls. Many Tories want to forget that for the period of the election, but it is an important consideration.

As against that, there is the present position of Tony Blair. He has adroitly shifted his position and his party's from a sort of low-grade Eurofanaticism — from which his predecessor, John Smith, suffered more acutely — to a politicised expression of generalised opposition to Euro-federalism. "We want a Europe where national identities are not submerged and where countries co-operate together, not a giant and unmanageable European superstate run from the centre." He adds, "I am a British patriot." Yet he is a British patriot who stands on a policy of waiting to see whether a single currency is in Britain's economic interest; he has no objection in principle to the sacrifice of Britain's political integrity. This means that he is willing to take the next and irreversible step towards the creation of "a giant and unmanageable European superstate run from the centre". Tony Blair often says that this election is a question of trust: a Eurosceptic cannot trust either John Major's record or Tony Blair's promises.

One has to look beyond the leaders, at the parties. In this campaign, the Tory Eurofanatics have been pushed into a richly deserved oblivion. Kenneth Clark would not be the Chancellor of the Exchequer in any future Conservative government. Michael Heseltine sketched that silly cartoon. Ted Heath has about as much remaining influence as Edwina Currie. The Tory Eurofanatics cannot even threaten to form a fifth party, since they could not expect to hold a single seat. As

William Rees-Mogg

Wrecker on the woolsack

Can Mackay block the Scots, asks

Magnus Linklater

By this time next week, a process will have begun which could take us back to the heady days of 1910 — the last election when the constitution, in Lloyd George's words, was "on the ballot paper". The crisis then was prompted by a House of Lords decision to block the Government's Finance Bill after it had been passed by the Commons. This time, the signal is more subtle. It comes from the present Lord Chancellor, who has indicated that the Lords might resort to similar tactics to wreck Labour's plans for devolution. It is a remarkable intervention. Lord Mackay of Clashfern is not only a Scot himself, but a canny lawyer with a reputation for lofty detachment from the narrow bracket of party politics. An apocryphal story has it that when he was offered the job, his friend the late John Smith, rang him up and said: "Congratulations, James — I didn't know you were a Tory." To which he replied: "Neither did I." As he steps down from the wooolsack, he certainly carries with him an impressive degree of cross-party respect.

Which is why the view he has just expressed is so startling. It goes beyond anything said by John Major or the Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth, and appears to challenge the right of the Scottish electorate to decide its own constitutional future. Lord Mackay would protest that this grossly overstates his position. But let us see: In the course of an interview with *The Scotsman* on Tuesday, he said that the House of Lords would be justified in challenging the Bill Labour has promised to hold a referendum on Scottish devolution. To get it through in time, Labour may need to dispense with the normal practice of discussing the details in a committee of the whole House. This is not, remember, legislation for the future governance of Scotland, just the preliminary referendum bill. Nevertheless, in Lord Mackay's view, peers should challenge it because it may not have been debated line by line on the floor of the Commons.

If this were the case, the Lords would be justified in scrutinising the Bill in detail themselves, so delaying it well beyond the prescribed time. The effect would be to overturn the very first pledge of a Blair government — to give the Scottish people a referendum on Home Rule within its first year of office — and it flies directly in the face of a basic rule. The Salisbury Convention, drawn up by the sixth Marquess of Salisbury under Attlee's Government, lays down that Tory peers may use their inbuilt majority to amend, but not to defeat legislation for which the electorate has clearly voted.

Lord Mackay is going well beyond this. In the course of his interview he comes out with a clear party line: "I have always maintained that the real power remains in Westminster. What you do if you create a Scottish parliament is create a focus for disenchantment in Scotland with what's being done in the Parliament at Westminster. That's why I think it is a serious threat." The implication is clear: whatever choice Scottish voters make on May 1, a referendum to give them the final say must be fought, delayed, and if necessary stopped. In support of his case Lord Mackay maintains that the Salisbury rules allow this to happen, simply because of the magnitude of what is being proposed.

But the legal technicalities he uses to argue his case will be lost on most Scottish voters. They have been pressing for devolution for as long as any of us can remember. They have been warned about its dangers, told that the West Lothian Question is an insuperable barrier, reminded that it could be the slippery slope to independence, repeatedly harangued about the "tartan tax". Despite all this, most will opt on election day for parties committed to the introduction of a Scottish parliament. Furthermore they are likely, in my view, to vote "yes" in a future referendum. To say that they are "sleepwalking" into devolution is condescending and ignores the passion with which the issue has been debated in Scotland and the detail in which it has been examined. Most Scots know what they want, and they expect their politicians to solve the problems ahead.

A traditional Tory party would long ago have recognised this democratic impulse and found a quiet way to reflect it. All the great reforms, the creation of a Scottish Secretary, the independence of the Scottish Office, the size of the block grant — have been introduced by Conservative administrations. The only reason a Scottish parliament has been opposed is that Margaret Thatcher announced her opposition to it in 1981. Since then the status quo has been holy writ, and the Scottish Tories have been reduced to a rump. No one doubts that the problems arising from this massive constitutional shift must be debated every inch of the way by a responsible opposition. But if Lord Mackay, with all the weight of his office, is indicating that the Tories will contest the settled will of the Scottish people even to the point of opposing their right to vote on their own future, he need not be surprised if, by the early hours of May 2, his party has simply disappeared through the floorboards.

Buy, buy

LABOUR PARTY workers are being shamelessly encouraged into buying copies of their party anthem, *Things Can Only Get Better* by D-ream. The effect will be to push it up the charts. The move has echoes of the vote-rigging row over last year's *Today* programme Man of the Year poll, which led to Tony Blair's disqualification.

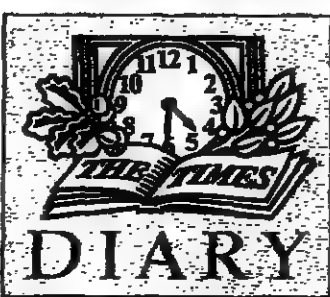
On Tuesday afternoon, Maggie Jones, a member of Labour's National Executive Council since 1994, was spotted with another member of the Millbank staff taking orders from office colleagues for copies of the record, which was re-released at the beginning of this week. A source inside Millbank said: "They were planning to go to the record shop and buy them in bulk." The idea, my source suggests, "was to boost the sales and influence the charts".

Jones, however, denied trying to influence the charts: "I simply went round and collected money from my colleagues and placed an order with the distributors. The CDs will be delivered and handed out on that basis." Yesterday afternoon, however, bags from Our Price, Tower Records and Virgin were cluttering her desk. D-ream's

record company, East West Records, confirms that "in the first few days of release the record has done surprisingly well".

The Referendum Party should try a similar ploy. Its anthem *Let the People Decide*, by the Rabble Army, released on April 14, has thudded into the charts at No 110.

● New York's Labour supporters gathered to discuss their party's



chances last night in the exceedingly swish surroundings of Penthouse B at the Royalton Hotel. The menu was bangers and mash — though the over-designed Royalton's concept of the meal would not be recognisable in Barnsley. Here, a sausage means Toulouse, mustard means Dijon and the mash, like the socialism, has the consistency of semolina.

Bottom line

THE DEATH yesterday of Denis Compton brought a tear to the eye of Sir Colin Cowdrey, the former England captain who shared a couple of Test innings with the Brylcreemed batsman in the 1950s. Though an angel at the wicket, Compton was a devil back in the locker room, where his peg was always beside Cowdrey's for alpha-

betical reasons. "He never had any clothes, so he just used to pinch mine," said Cowdrey yesterday. "I'd end up losing my shirt, my socks — whole wardrobes of the stuff, even my underwear. Not even my Cash's nametapes stopped him."

Compton famously turned up at Lord's still wearing his dinner jacket after a hefty night's play. But one garment was never touched says Cowdrey. "My trousers. They'd never have fitted — my bottom was much bigger than his."

Tentative

LAST year saw the portly figure of the actor David Hemmings shuffling from Ascot to Goodwood.



David Hemmings: artist, and now a seasoned campaigner

Lord's to Henley, sketchbook permanently to hand. Next month, Belgravia sees the fruits of his stint in the hospitality tents. His first solo exhibition of paintings is entitled "Eclectic Similarities: An Artist's View of the Season".

Though still best known for his parts in such cult films as *Blow Up*, Hemmings has been doing ever more painting in between acting jobs. Speaking from his Battersea atelier, he says his latest work has been the most fun: "I just love watching the English upper classes. So quirky."

Flickering

A FRISON ripples through London with the news that Donatella



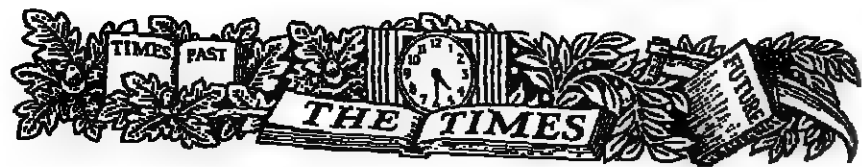
Donatella into marble

Flick, who recently separated from Muck Flick, the Mercedes-Benz heir, has now been paid her divorce settlement of around £30 million. The gold-tap brigade is anticipating a party.

Donatella, one of London's top society hostesses, has told friends to keep free an evening in early June. It may be one of her musical evenings, but the high-rollers believe that she is planning a house-warming.

Last year she bought the £5 million house in Knightsbridge where Winston Churchill lived, and decorators have been laying acres of Carrera marble.

P.H.S



POLLS APART

Both parties might prefer a narrower lead

"Nightmare on Major Street" was to be the theme of this morning's Labour Party press conference. Yesterday an ICM poll for *The Guardian* showed Labour's lead almost evaporating to five points. So a fifth Tory term, that had previously seemed a fantasy, had turned into a possibility to be contemplated and challenged. Part of the art of campaign management is to take advantage of bad news. But now our MORI poll suggests good news for Labour — with the Tories down five points to 27 per cent and Labour 21 points ahead on 48 per cent. Which is the voter to believe?

Fluctuations in the polls during an election campaign, usually about ten days before the day itself, seem to play a traditional part in British politics. Who can forget "wobbly Thursday" in the 1987 campaign, when even Margaret Thatcher lost her nerve for a day? When pollsters ask 1,000 people for their views, they have a 95 per cent chance of reflecting the opinion of the whole electorate within a band of three per cent each way. In other words, a 30 per cent finding for the Tories suggests nationwide support of between 27 and 33 per cent. But on average one poll in 20 is likely to be way out of line.

So was the ICM one of those "rogues"? Or is ours? Until several other polls have been conducted, it is hard to tell conclusively. But so far our MORI findings seem more in line with those from other polling organisations, including Gallup's daily rolling poll for *The Daily Telegraph*. Our figures for the Tories are a little low, perhaps, but the overall picture, of a large, steady Labour lead, is likely to be confirmed.

Oddly, though, the ICM findings suited both main parties better. The poll will have helped to boost Tory morale, both at the top of the party and on the stump. Nothing is more dejecting than fighting a battle that seems hopeless. In the Labour camp, there was cheer yesterday, too. A close race should

encourage Labour supporters to turn out and vote, particularly those who are unenamoured by Tony Blair but would hate even more to see John Major back.

Labour wants to focus floating voters' minds on what might happen should the Conservatives actually win. There has arguably been too little consideration of the Tories' prospects in government — just because the idea has so often seemed so far-fetched. The party itself seems to be assuming defeat. Its leadership contenders jostle for position and its candidates drift inexorably from the official line on the single currency. The latter must have calculated that they were more likely to lose their seats than to serve under another Major administration — and that, under a Eurosceptical leader, their actions were more likely to be rewarded than punished.

If voters are to make a fair and considered choice on May 1, they ought to be asking themselves how another five Tory years would look. Would the party continue to be given by feeding? Would Mr Major be forced to become more sceptical, or would he be replaced? In either eventuality, what would happen to Ken Clarke? And would the Government be able to tap a new vein of competence, or would ministers continue to stumble on, tripping up over unexpected events? When Labour asks where the money will come from for Tory policies such as the transfer of tax allowances, it is easy to laugh at the tables being turned. But the question still deserves to be addressed.

Labour too has some clearer answers to give. Mr Blair's increasingly relaxed and confident demeanour has improved his party's campaign. He has even loosened his style enough to inspire audiences with his oratory. But he is still tight-lipped on the two most important issues for the next Parliament: devolution and the single currency. Between now and May 1, the voters want to hear cool clarity, not warm words.

AFTER THE SIEGE

How Peru's President should use his success

The dramatic end to the siege of the Japanese residence in Lima has been greeted with jubilation in Peru, relief in Japan and admiration by terrorist experts around the world. The operation was a masterpiece of meticulous planning, subterfuge and skilful execution. Two of the troops storming the residence were killed, and one of the Peruvian hostages later died of a heart attack. But the rescue alive of 71 hostages after an ordeal that lasted 126 days is a political and military triumph that will boost the standing of President Fujimori throughout Latin America. It will also send a grim message to all other terrorists using urban violence to further their cause.

The challenge thrown down by the Tupac Amaru was unprecedented. The capture of so many high-ranking hostages, including ambassadors, ministers, Peru's Foreign Minister and even the brother of the President, ruled out an immediate military response. The terrorists believed that they had already won a moral victory by forcing a notoriously hardline President, whose reputation rested on his boast that he could eliminate terrorism from his country, to negotiate. But the hostage-takers made several mistakes which were intelligently exploited by the Peruvian Government.

By holding ambassadors and diplomats from so many countries they involved most of the world in their actions. Terrorist experts, advisers and special forces — including the SAS — were immediately put at Senior Fujimori's disposal. The terrorists also believed that, by settling in for a long siege and not executing any hostage, they would forestall a military rescue and increase the political pressure on Peru,

especially by Japan. Instead, they gave the Peruvian special forces invaluable time to prepare: to dig tunnels, map the residence layout and locate the terrorists and the remaining hostages. And by sticking to the demand that the Government free some 400 fellow Tupac Amaru prisoners, they virtually ruled out any political solution.

President Fujimori is now savouring his triumph. The success of the rescue has justified his refusal to warn the Japanese Government of his plans — a snub which may long rankle in Tokyo but which sends a useful message that Japan's reputation for pusillanimous capitulation to terrorism has won it little respect abroad. He now has a choice. If he is unwise, he will use his new power and popularity to consolidate an already autocratic style of government. He will regard his unfinished fight against terrorism as the priority for the rest of his term, knowing that the threat from the Tupac Amaru is not over and the Maoist Shining Path, though for the moment dormant, is still a real threat to Peru's impoverished villagers.

If, however, Señor Fujimori is to achieve lasting influence and greatness, he should use his new stature to force through some of the democratic and social reforms so needed by his country. In the fight against terrorism, gross abuses have crept into the legal system, many basic rights have been overturned and the conditions in which prisoners are held are often abysmal. The President does not need to show magnanimity to terrorists; but he can do much to ensure that new enemies of democracy no longer breed among the slums of Lima or in the shadow of political repression.

THE COMPTON CLASS

Cricket needs fun and sunshine as well as results and the Ashes

Other cricketers (very few, and most of them are dead) have left more records for the timeless scorers of *Wisden*. But none has left the afterglow of charm of Denis Compton in the folk memory, even 50 years after his golden summer of 1947. Spectators who saw him in his pomp then are now outnumbered by those for whom he is only a legend. But he has become one of the foundation legends of the game that lives on its history as well as on the prospects of each returning summer.

Cricketers can be divided into Cavaliers or Roundheads. The game needs both. And the grind of the modern game seems to need rude mechanicals as well. Close, Boycott and Trevor Bailey were Roundheads. Botham, Gower and Dexter were Cavaliers. But in the England XI of all time, the captain of the Cavaliers is Denis Compton. He was the first of England's sporting superstars. Perhaps somebody will play for England and make a Test century earlier. But modern fixture lists make it fantasy that the same man could also win FA Cup and league championship medals with Arsenal and play football for England.

The following scorebooks are starting enough. But it is style as well as centuries that make a legend. After six grim years of war the golden boy charmed the nation as well as winning Tests. The athletic school-boy, whose mother wanted him to take a boy, whose mother wanted him to take a steady town-hall job, created a year-round sporting career at Highbury in the winter and in the summer with the MCC ground

staff. His period good looks advertised Brylcreem from the nation's billboards.

And because he clearly played for pleasure, Compton gave pleasure. The playboy was known to turn up for a Test still in evening dress, or to advance down the wicket to the fast bowler while he was still running up. His technique gave him that precise cover drive, while his reflexes made the cheekiest of late cuts from far out of the crease. He was famous for walking at once when the umpire's finger was raised, and while he joked with the opposition he never slugged them. He was the only batsman in the history of the game to have wished him partner for a single and to have wished him the best of luck at the same time. Compton's first call was an opening bid, a tentative statement of policy. The second one was a basis for negotiation. So the dialogue from the striker's end might go: "Yes... wait... no... oh! God!... sorry!"

No hero could have made those scores without steely determination and skill beneath the charm. It is possible that Compton might not have fared as well in the siege and bombardment of the modern game even though he scored well enough against Lindwall and Miller. He would be cheering for England to regain the Ashes at last this year, as he helped them to in 1953. Spectators will vote for that. Even more they long for another Cavalier so bold that hardened professionals left the dressing-room to watch as he walked out to the wicket.

Tory 'failures' and the farmers' vote

From Sir Simon Gourlay

Sir, Over the last few years the effect of the Government's lack of positive policies for agriculture has proved disastrous for farmers and consumers alike.

This has been most painfully demonstrated in the BSE crisis, the most important issue for British agriculture since the Second World War. Ineptitude and day-by-day crisis management over the last ten years have cost farmers and the taxpayer billions of pounds, and yet the whole of the beef industry is still reeling.

In Europe the Government has failed even more abjectly. The ban on the export of British beef is still in place, despite the Prime Minister's promises that it would be lifted by November last year. Six months on there has been absolutely no progress in lifting the ban and in the meantime imports of beef from Germany and Holland (where they now also have BSE) are ruining our domestic market.

I believe that through these failures the Conservatives have forfeited the right to the support of the farming community. Labour, with its clear and constructive proposals (recently published in *Reforming the Common Agricultural Policy*) and its commitment to an effective, independent food standards agency, presents us with an opportunity to regain *terra firma*. We should take it.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON GOURLAY
(President,
National Farmers' Union, 1986-91)
Maryvale Farm,
Hill House Farm, Knighton, Powys,
April 18.

Labour and schools

From Sir Robert Balchin

Sir, Your leading article, "Parents and politics" (April 16), suggests that "Labour has no intention of abolishing... grant-maintained schools." In fact, Labour's most recent education publication, *Diversity and Excellence*, lists ways in which grant-maintained status for schools will indeed be abolished.

Such schools will be forced to relinquish up to 10 per cent of their funds, which will be given to the local authority. All funding, including capital funding, will be redirected through the authority.

Local authority appointees will be made to the schools' governing bodies; admissions will be "within a consultative partnership" and the schools will be inspected by local authorities.

Tony Blair's education speech (report, April 15) revealed no change to plans which would inevitably force teacher redundancies as cash is re-routed to local councils to fritter away on unwanted bureaucracy.

Yours truly,
BOB BALCHIN
(Chairman,
The Grant-Maintained Schools
Foundation,
36 Great Smith Street,
Westminster, SW1,
April 18.

From Mr Victor Serebriakoff

Sir, Many of the changes that new Labour has made in its education policies are to be welcomed, but there remains a strong element of the over-egalitarian trend from the past.

However unfair it may seem it is better for all concerned to spend more on highly motivated, able children than on those for whom the late stages of education are a waste of time, when they might better be trained for a suitable career.

We do not train top-class athletes, musicians, dancers and sportsmen in exactly the same way and at the same cost as we train office workers and builders.

Yours truly,
VICTOR SEREBRIAKOFF
(President, The Mensa Foundation
for Gifted Children,
Flat One, 6 The Paragon, SE3,
April 18.

From Mr Peter Hitchens

Sir, Your leader says Labour has no intention of abolishing grant-maintained or church schools. Quite true: it plans to dilute them.

Labour says it will restore the Department of Education guidelines on school admissions, which state, in paragraph 42, that church schools should take care to ensure that interviews are used only to judge religious suitability, and that their purpose is made clear in their written admission policies. Governing bodies may otherwise be vulnerable to criticism that judgments about a child's suitability were based on social, ethnic or academic considerations.

The London Oratory's prospectus states that all applicants will be interviewed, adding:

The interview is an important and decisive part of the admission procedure and its main function is to assess whether the aims, attitudes, values and expectations of the parents and the boy are in harmony with those of the school.

The Oratory's existing character — disciplined, academically rigorous and very different from most comprehensive run by Labour education authorities — has been achieved at least partly through these interviews.

Yours sincerely,
PETER HITCHENS
(Assistant Editor,
The Express,
245 Blackfriars Road, SE1,
April 18.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

No accord in Church of England on homosexuality

From Mr Richard Ashton

Sir, It must be comforting for beleaguered Tory party supporters to know that there is always one great national institution which is even more prone to grotesque forms of self-injury. I refer of course to the Church of England, and in particular to the letter today from the Archbishop of Southwark, who frankly admits that his sexuality is a force that can only be indulged, not controlled.

While we may admire his honesty, the suggestion that self-gratification should be the basis for a moral position comes ill from a leader of the Christian community. For those who believe that sexuality is not so much a source of pleasure and pain, but a gift from God to be used for his glory and our salvation, might I suggest a re-reading of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*. Much abused by the Sixties generation, it contains a timely message of hope not to be heard lately from liberal Anglicanism.

Yours truly,
RICHARD ASHTON,
5 Farm Lane,
Old Hall Green, Ware, Hertfordshire,
April 22.

From the Reverend Malcolm Johnson

Sir, I found it a very refreshing experience listening to a former chairman of the Church of England's Doctrine Commission, Bishop John Baker, take such a positive view of homosexual relationships at a meeting in London (report, April 22).

Now is the time for other bishops who take a similar view to issue a joint statement following the example of 23 bishops of the Episcopal Church in the US who declared in 1979 that they saw "a redeeming quality" in gay and

lesbian relationships.

If our bishops speak out individually they will be rubbished by the tabloid press and blackmailed by their fundamentalist clergy, who will threaten to withdraw funds.

The present Bench of Bishops seems obsessed by the need to speak with one voice, whereas many of us leave that on this and other subjects there is difference of opinion. Why wait until retirement to speak honestly and openly?

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM JOHNSON,
Swan House, 43 Strawberry Vale,
Twickenham, Middlesex,
April 22.

From the Reverend Alastair Thom

Sir, The Archbishop of Southwark argues for gay "marriages" on the grounds that he would find celibacy difficult. I find it difficult to love my enemies, but I do not therefore reject that teaching of Jesus for myself or for others. God's laws were given as a blessing, not a curse.

Those who wish to abandon the Christian Scriptures should admit it and not seek to remain in authority within the Church.

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR G. THOM,
Church House,
Howes Close, Mountfield Road, N3,
April 22.

From Mr Timothy H. Jones

Sir, Bishop Baker, the former Bishop of Salisbury, may be right to assert that there are some moral issues in human relationships where universal laws cannot be applied. That is presumably why the House of Bishops in 1991 stated, rather courageously in my

opinion, that gay relationships are acceptable among the laity.

However, I would venture to say that the bishop is unwise to suggest that men and women who are practising homosexuals should be admitted to the priesthood. This is an entirely different matter and is theologically and morally inconsistent on two levels.

First, the office of priest is a public one and is exposed to an exceptionally high degree of public scrutiny. Secondly, no matter how hard we try to accommodate the beliefs of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement — and try we must — the fact remains that the theological ideal represented in Scripture is overwhelmingly focused on heterosexual partnerships as normative for society. A priest, who is in a position of leadership and authority, is not in a position to suggest otherwise in his or her relationships.

The distinction between opposing the ordination to priesthood of practising gays and lesbians and allowing same-sex relationships amongst the laity is an extremely uncomfortable compromise for both sides of this debate. On one side there are those who want a ban on all gay/lesbian sexual relations, whether among the priesthood or the laity, and on the other side are those who want full equality for gay and lesbian priests.

I believe, however, the compromise offered by the House of Bishops is possibly the only way to avoid a cataclysmic rift in the Church of England, beside which the ordination of women will seem like a joyride.

Yours sincerely,
TIMOTHY H. JONES,
25-3 Edina Place, Edinburgh,
April 22.

'Outrageous' suppression of Shaw

From the Secretary of The Shaw Society

Sir, I applaud Peter Hall's letter (April 21) deploring the unavailability of the most important plays in the Shaw canon for public performance. They have been bought and hoarded, as Hollywood studios used to buy and hoard rights in a story just in case they might ever want to film it.

In Clause 7 of his will, GBS stipulated that his executor (the Public Trustee) should not be bound by commercial considerations exclusively, it being his desire that he should give due weight to artistic and public and human considerations.

With this in mind he named the Society of Authors as his posthumous literary agent. But that institution has, from the start, chosen to put commercial considerations very much at the head of affairs.

Its officers might well have felt bound by law to do so, as anyone handling an estate is supposed to administer trusts to the best financial advantage of the beneficiaries — but there is always the possibility of either compromise or defiance of a bad law.

Five years after Shaw's death in 1950, the Society of Authors not only sanctioned a musical, *My Fair Lady*,

based on Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, but negotiated the highest royalty percentage for it by agreeing to the outrageous demand of the impresarios for a worldwide ban on performances of Shaw's play — on stage, film, radio and television — so as to give the musical a clear run.

The Shaw Society immediately formed a campaigning body, called the Not Bloody Likely Committee, to prevent the Copyright Act from being used in this way. Ensuing correspondence in *The Times* included anti-copyright letters from Allen Lane (December 4, 1956), E. M. Forster (December 7) and T. S. Eliot (December 11). Graham Greene publicly announced his resignation from the Society of Authors in protest.

As a result, a few amateur productions of *Pygmalion* were then permitted; but the general professional ban — which the Society of Authors described euphemistically as a "form of traffic control" — persisted for ten years.

Yours faithfully,
BARBARA SMOKER
(Secretary, The Shaw Society),
51 Farmfield Road,
Downham, Bromley, Kent,
April 22.

Bone marrow donors

From Mr Mark Bailie

Sir, I would add to Ian Franklin's excellent letter of today on the dilemma of bone marrow donation an important point — one close to my heart.

My brother Tim tragically died from leukaemia in Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, last August after a six-month period of remission. Following our unsuccessful tissue-type match I have now been accepted for inclusion on the panel of the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust.

Not being able to match my brother — and only some 25 per cent of siblings do — my decision to put myself forward in the hope of being able to help another was, I believe, central to the ethos of donorship. I was unable to

help my brother, who might not have survived anyway, but I am certain in my wish to try and help someone.

Confidentiality is a central concern, but recipients may contact donors totally confidentially through organisations like the Anthony Nolan Trust. How about some lottery money for them?

My continuing blood donations aim, further, to support a service whose many hundreds of pints of blood made my brother's last two years possible. Thankfully he now has a beautiful daughter, born in December — another testament to his strength.

Yours faithfully,
MARK BAILIE,
7 Fine Grove, Ormskirk, Lancashire,
April 21.

Backing the charter

From Mr John Raybould

Sir, Isobel Allen, of the Policy Studies Institute, is correct to say in her new survey that unrealistic demands and a culture of complaint inspired by the Patient's Charter were found to be causing stress and burn-out among nurses and doctors (report, April 22).

When I was in the Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, after a thrombosis, the patient in the bed opposite me actually read the Patient's Charter aloud when the nurses were around and tutted them for any delays or deviations. I thought the young nurses, short-handed for much of the time, behaved magnificently and stoically under abominable provocation. Perhaps the clipboard-toting managers and unrealistic politicians should have a spell in a hospital bed to experience the "sharp end". If I had been a nurse on duty I would have been very tempted to give the barrack-room lawyer of a patient a good jab on his backside.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN RAYBOULD,
3 Chestnut Court, High Street,
Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex,
April 22.

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.

Medical consent

From Lord Ashbourne and Mr Gerard Wright, QC

Sir, According to Dr R. H. Nicholson, Editor of the *Bulletin of Medical Ethics* (letter, April 10), the Royal College of Physicians and the Medical Research Council have promulgated guidelines "advising that medical research procedures which are of no benefit to a subject who cannot consent to them may be performed provided that they are of no more than minimal risk". In other words, children, people who are mentally disabled and people in coma may be used as human guinea pigs.

The law of this country is perfectly clear: research may only be carried out on a person unable to consent to it if the research will benefit the patient. This principle applies to the taking of blood or other DNA material from a child. A court will permit blood or DNA sampling only if it is in the interests of the child to do so.

Any doctor relying on the guidelines quoted by Dr Nicholson is at risk of both criminal and civil proceedings.

Yours etc,
ASHBOURNE,
GERARD WRIGHT,
Alert (Against Legalised Euthanasia — Research and Teaching),
27 Walpole Street, SW3,
April 11.

Charity scratchcards

From Mr Mike Crouch

Sir, It would appear that Camelot are having a problem selling their lottery scratchcards and are considering spending more money on their promotion (report, April 21).

Having failed twice to obtain funding from the National Lottery to support our charity, one major source of income for us has been the sale of named scratchcards promoted locally by Littlewoods.

May I therefore respectfully suggest that Camelot withdraw entirely from this form of fundraising, with no identified target for their largesse, and leave this field to registered charities who work with promoters to raise urgently needed money for really worthwhile causes. At least people could choose what they support rather than all their moneys going into one large pot.

Yours faithfully,
M. CROUCH (Trustee and
Chairman of Fundraising),
TY Hafan,
The Children's Hospice in Wales,
Hamard House, Cardiff Road,
Barry, Vale of Glamorgan,
April 22.

From the Director General of Action Research

Sir, You report today that Camelot donates 28p in the pound to charity.

This is not true. The money goes to five groups of "good causes", one of which, the National Lottery Charities Board, receives just one fifth of that amount — ie, 5.6p in every pound.

Government ministers, among others, may wish to perpetuate this confusion; but allocating money to make up for the shortfall in government spending on the arts, sport, heritage and the Millennium Fund would not be everybody's interpretation of charity.

Yours faithfully,
ANNE LUTHER,
Director General, Action Research,
Vincent House,
Horsham, West Sussex,
April 21.

Victory anthem?

From Mr Gerard Green

Sir, Bolder than Westminster Abbey (letters, April 22 and 23), Norwich Cathedral have scheduled *Blair in B minor* for pre-election Evensong on Sunday, April 27. Their confidence is shown by the choice of anthem at the same service: *Alleluia: Who is this who comes in triumph?* — Malcolm (not Jeffrey) Archer.

Who needs the poets?

Yours faithfully,
GERARD GREEN,
64 The Close,
Norwich, Norfolk,
April 23.

One in the eye

From Mr Robert A. Jacques

Sir, The Independent Television Commission has issued a rebuke to the independent television companies for the lack of intellectual stimulus in much of their programming (report, April 23). In response to this criticism, the controller of network drama is quoted as being "gobsmacked".

I think I may have spotted part of the problem here.

Yours faithfully,
R. A. JACQUES,
Mimram House, Tewin Water,
Welwyn, Hertfordshire,
April 23.

limited in its application. That means that the possibilities and opportunities for recreation are limited. This is, however, undoubted . . .

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INSIDE
SECTION
2
TODAY



ARTS

Even after 40 years,
Hitchcock's *Vertigo*
is film of the week
PAGES 37-39



TRAVEL

Qantas offers five
tropical island
paradises for sale
PAGES 42, 43



SPORT

Champions kept
in check by
Russell and Young
PAGES 44-52

TELEVISION
AND
RADIO
PAGES
50, 51

Business Editor Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY APRIL 24 1997

IMF inflation fear as British growth set to continue

By BRONWEN MADDOX, ALASDAIR
MURRAY AND PHILIP BASSETT

THE UK's five-year economic upswing is set to continue throughout 1997 but there is a threat that inflation will rise next year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF's annual *World Economic Outlook*, published yesterday, gives warning that wage rises have begun to pick up as unemployment has continued to fall, and says the UK needs to tighten fiscal policy to rein in demand if interest rates are not to rise.

The IMF warning came as new sales and manufacturing data published yesterday provided further evidence of the country's "two-speed" economy. Retail sales grew again but the manufacturing sector remains subdued, with exports falling at the fastest rate for four years.

The IMF report strikes an optimistic note, both for developed and developing countries, largely because of the robustness of the US economy and the improvement in Japan. But it gives a stern lecture on unemployment, calling on European countries, excluding the UK, to make radical reforms of benefits,

taxes and employment laws to bring down unemployment.

The IMF credits the European Monetary Union project with pushing through some reforms, but believes it is also "exacting a toll", partly because it is creating business and consumer uncertainty, and says that failure to push ahead quickly with monetary union will further undermine confidence.

The quarterly industrial trends survey, published by the Confederation for British Industry, showed a net balance of 23 per cent of companies in April reporting a fall in orders, compared with 18 per cent

in March. Export prices are also dropping more quickly than at any time since the early 1990s. But total new orders picked up — with a net balance of 12 per cent of companies reporting an improved orders book — boosted by an increase in domestic orders.

The CBI said the survey shows the rising pound is "starting to take its toll" on Britain's export performance.

Election uncertainty caused the pound to fall 2 pence yesterday to DM12.7807. Sterling's trade-weighted index declined 0.8 to 99.3, while the pound also lost ground against

the dollar, closing over a cent down at \$1.6233.

Retail sales volumes grew by 0.3 per cent in March compared with 0.4 per cent in February, according to the Office for National Statistics. The annual rate also slowed slightly to 4.0 per cent, compared with 4.4 per cent in February.

Economists said the trend in retail sales remains upwards, with sales volumes in the first quarter rising by 4.4 per cent compared to the same period last year — the largest increase since 1988. There is also concern that some retail price rises are beginning to stick, with

clothing and footwear volumes growing in spite of a 2 per cent increase in prices.

The minutes of the March monetary meeting, which were also published yesterday, show that Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, remains hawkish on the inflation outlook next year, and called at the meeting for a 0.25 per cent rate rise.

The City is convinced that continuing evidence of strong consumer demand and pressure from the Bank will force the incoming Chancellor to raise rates after the May 7 monetary meeting.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES	
FTSE 100	4387.7 (+41.8)
Yield	3.58%
FTSE All Share	5121.15 (+16.45)
Nikkei	18735.47 (+181.02)
New York	6822.78 (+10.83)
Dow Jones	775.31 (+0.70)

US RATE	
Federal Funds	5.75% (5%)
Long Bond	94.7% (94.7%)
Yield	7.08% (7.05%)

LONDON MONEY	
3-mth Interbank	8.7% (8.7%)
Libor long 6m	108% (108.7%)

STERLING	
New York	1.6210 (1.6205)
London	1.6233 (1.6238)
DM	2.7787 (2.7787)
FF	2.3804 (2.3804)
Sfr	2.3721 (2.3721)
Yen	204.71 (205.53)
S index	99.3 (100.1)

DOLLAR	
London	1.7128* (1.7173)
DM	5.7788* (5.7940)
Sfr	1.6628* (1.6635)
Yen	136.20* (135.33)
S index	108.7 (108.7)

NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent 15-day (Jul)	818.10 (\$18.10)

GOLD	
London close	\$340.86 (\$341.58)

Short arms

Bank of Scotland ruled out the takeover of a building society, claiming they had become too expensive. The bank said that it had deep pockets but short arms.

Page 29

Store surprises

Two regional department stores surprised the City with strong results. Both reported signs of growing consumer confidence, saying that the approach of the general election had not slowed spending. Page 33

CWC aims for digital launch in autumn

By ERIC REGULY

THE chairman of Cable and Wireless Communications said yesterday that the new company's 200-channel digital-television services will be available to customers by the autumn, possibly beating the digital launch planned by BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster.

Dick Brown said a £50 million advertising campaign, one of the largest in British history, has been scheduled for the autumn to promote the television and telephony services provided by the company.

He said: "We are aggressively going after digital. I think we will be digital at the same time or earlier than them [BSkyB]."

CWC, formed by the merger of Mercury Communications with the cable operations of Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron, is to start trading on the London and New York stock exchanges on Monday or Tuesday, when its £5 billion share flotation is finally completed.

BSkyB, which is 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of *The Times*, has stated that it intends to have its digital systems ready in the autumn.

However, there is speculation that delays in forming the new company designed to subsidise the retail price of the digital television set-top boxes may put off the launch until early next year.

BSkyB hinted yesterday that the formation of the company, which is known internally as the Interactive Services Company, or Isco, may not be announced until after the general election on May 1.

Isco is to be jointly owned by BSkyB, British Telecom, Midland Bank and Matsushita, the Japanese electronics company that owns the Panasonic brand name.

In exchange for a collective investment of about £500 million, all of which would be used to subsidise the prices of the television set-top boxes, the four are to share in the

interactive income, such as home shopping and banking, made possible by the boxes.

Mr Brown, who is also chief executive of Cable and Wireless, which will own about 53 per cent of CWC after the flotation goes ahead, said that CWC's digital boxes are already being manufactured by General Instruments of America.

CWC stated last month that the boxes will cost £180 million. It is spending a further £110 million to build digital technology into its cable networks. The company is also in negotiations with Walt Disney, Time Warner, Viacom and other programme producers for film and pay-per-view rights.

Mr Brown said the size of CWC — it will start trading with almost 600,000 cable television customers on Monday or Tuesday — will give it enough market clout to negotiate discounts with programme suppliers, including BSkyB, which currently provide the vast majority of the cable companies' television programme content.

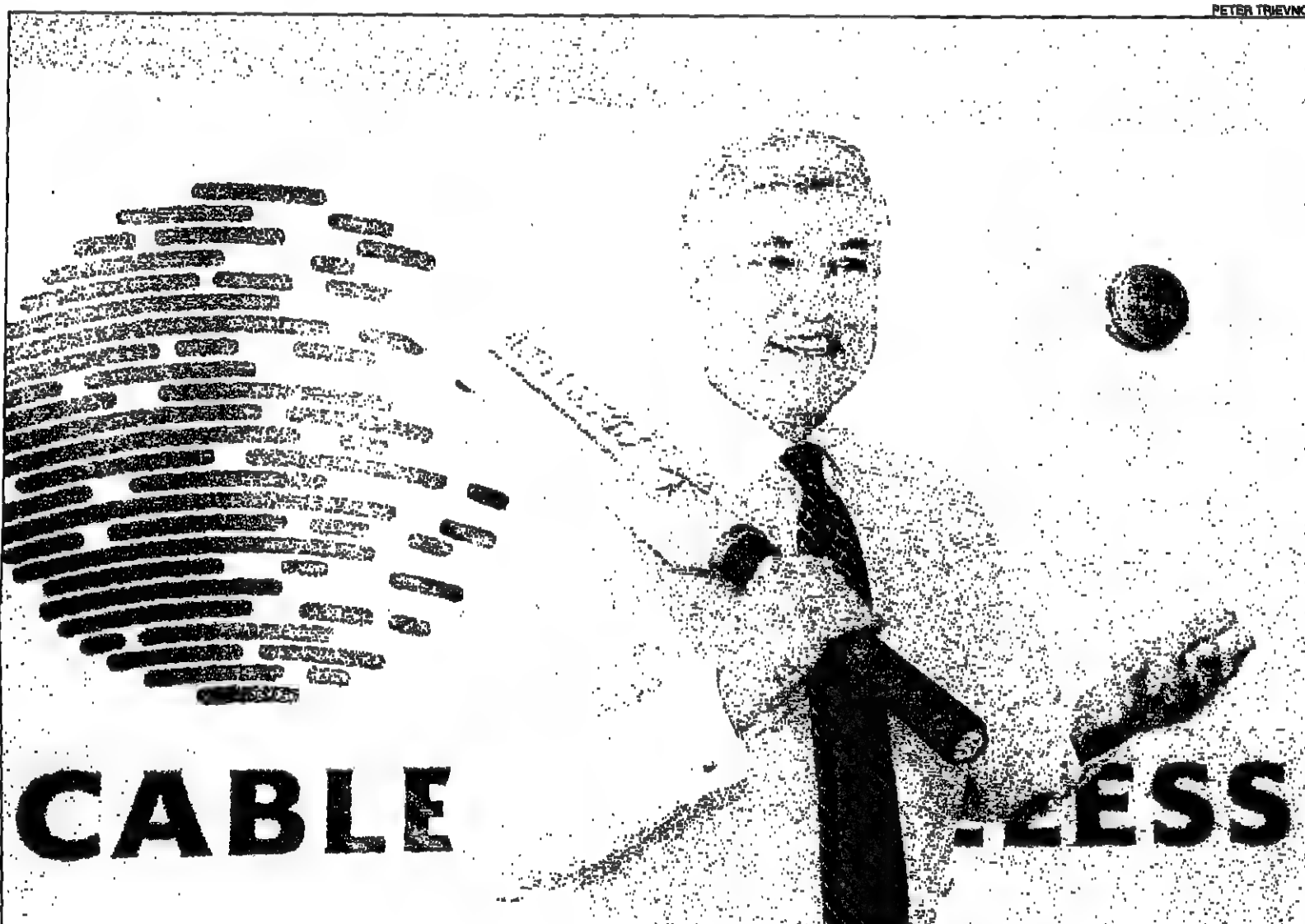
In a separate development, Mr Brown said that Cable and Wireless has emerged as one of two contenders to buy a controlling, 49 per cent stake in Entel, the Panamanian national telephone company that is to be privatised during May.

The Panamanian Government is to keep 49 per cent for itself, but is to sell the remaining 2 per cent to the company's employees. GTE, the American local phone company, has emerged as the other bidder.

Winning Entel would consolidate the position of Cable and Wireless as the dominant telephone company in the Caribbean region and give it a strong base in Central America's fastest-growing telecoms market.

The company has a virtual monopoly in the Caribbean islands, with operations that stretch from Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago.

New contender, page 31



Dick Brown, the Cable and Wireless big hitter, who is aiming for the lead in digital television with a 200 channel service this year

A&L shares top auction average

By CAROLINE MERRELL

SHARES in Alliance & Leicester rose 12p to 545p yesterday, 12p more than the average price achieved in three auctions held by Cazenove, its broker.

The auctions were deemed to be the easiest method for the 27 per cent of A&L members who wished to sell straight away to dispose of their holdings.

The service was free. Many may now wish they had sold through their brokers. Each shareholder who sold through the free service offered by the Alliance & Leicester will now get £1.334 in their accounts on settlement day on April 28. If investors had chosen to sell shares on the first day of trading, they could have made £1.405, assuming a share price of 570p and commission of £20.

The average price paid for shares in the final auction was 525p. Top price was 550p and the bottom was 525p.

European fraud costs UK £8bn

By ROBERT MILLER

FRAUD in Europe is costing British taxpayers and consumers in excess of £8 billion a year, more than double previous estimates, according to an authoritative new report.

Deloitte & Touche, the accountant and management consultant, said yesterday that international fraud across the European Union cost up to £12 billion. This figure will continue to grow unless governments throughout Europe are prepared to put in place a tougher infrastructure, backed by both the resources and "the will to put fraud to flight".

Will Inglis, the Deloitte and Touche partner who compiled the *Fraud without Frontiers* report for the European Commission, said: "Everyone pays for fraud through higher taxes, higher prices and shoddy goods, even if they are not a direct victim."

The scale of fraud within the EU and the way in which fraudsters use "havens of se-

crecy and fiscal paradises" has long concerned UK fraud squad officers. An anti-fraud budget spread across numerous UK agencies costs around £50 million a year.

The old-time favourite frauds still flourish. These include drug evasion on tobacco, alcohol, vehicles, oil and petrol. Fraudsters sell illicit goods without paying taxes to EU countries.

Newer-style scams now extend to the piracy of cassettes and CD recordings, as well as impersonation, fraudulent electronic banking, lottery frauds and pyramid sales.

The report says the public sector is particularly vulnerable to fraud "because the giving of grants, benefits and subsidies is not always matched by an equivalent concern to monitor and prevent fraud". It has been said that in some countries, fraud is of a "comparable scale to the narcotics industry".

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Co-op bidders await injunction ruling

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

ANDREW REGAN and David Lyons, the men behind a £1.2 billion attempt to take over the Co-operative Wholesale Society, may have to admit defeat tomorrow if an injunction against them is upheld in the High Court.

The injunction prevents the two men and Galileo, the company they have set up to carry out the bid, from using any material provided by Allan Green, a CWS executive who was suspended last week. A hearing tomorrow will decide whether the injunction should stand. A spokesman for Galileo said: "If the judge is very severe in his ruling and finds significant damage has been done,

CWS could embark on other legal actions which could end the move."

Mr Regan, who heads the Guernsey-based Lanica Trust, and Mr Lyons yesterday returned seven boxes of documents and computer disks that they received from Mr Green.

Mr Lyons, chief executive of Galileo, wrote directly to all CWS board members suggesting that the society's legal action be dropped so that members may consider the Galileo proposal. He sent a draft copy of the 72-page proposal to the CWS secretary, Lennox Fyfe, chairman of the CWS, instructed that the proposal be returned "unopened and unread". In a reply to Mr Lyons, he said that the

CWS intended to press on with its legal action and secure a judgment for substantial damages.

Nunura, which has been preparing to lend £1.2 billion to Galileo, said it was still interested in pursuing the deal. It is believed that it would consider lending a similar amount to other bidders that might emerge.

The war of words between the two sides continued yesterday, with CWS accusing Mr Regan and Mr Lyons of encouraging Mr Green, while Mr Lyons said that the material was "provided voluntarily by an employee of CWS". According to a CWS spokesman, affidavits from Mr Green, received on Tuesday, and from Mr

Regan, received yesterday, gave widely different accounts of the documents that had changed hands. He also said that, according to Mr Regan's affidavit, CWS diskettes were downloaded on to a large number of computers.

Graham Melmoth, chief executive of CWS, wrote to Lord Hambro at Hambros Bank and Alan Keat, senior partner at Travers Smith Braithwaite, Galileo's solicitor, asking whether they had asked Mr Regan how the documents were obtained. Travers Smith Braithwaite declined to comment, while Hambros said it "had taken legal advice, assessed the ramifications and concluded that we should support our client in developing the proposal".

INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

John Lewis chairman criticises fat cats

FAT-CAT bosses have been severely criticised by the head of one of Britain's leading retail groups, who called for pay and incentives to be shared out among employees.

Stuart Hampson, chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, said yesterday that respect for business had been damaged by the fat-cat controversy and little had been done to repair the damage despite the Greenbury inquiry into executive pay.

He told the annual conference of the Institute of Directors at the Royal Albert Hall in London: "Let's face it, the

fairness in the relationship between rewards at the top and those throughout the business as a whole. If more 'thin cats' were having their contributions to success recognised and being rewarded, we'd be demonstrating that wealth creation benefits all those who create the wealth — not just those few who hold the wealth."

Mr Hampson's comments follow a number of cases in which shareholders have opposed high-paying incentive schemes and were made in the wake of controversy about the pay of monopoly utility bosses.

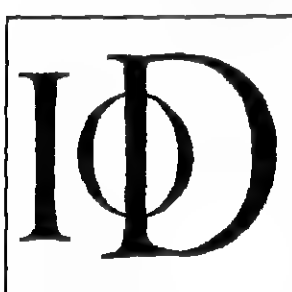
Mr Hampson said that pay should be based on performance and, in the case of monopolies, that the scope for performance would be less than in competitive industries.

High pay awards and share option benefits for directors gave rise to the Greenbury report into executive pay which called for a number of changes to stem boardroom excesses.

But the replacement of share options with complex long-term incentive schemes has aroused some shareholder unease where the programmes have been seen to reward mediocrity. Last year institutional shareholders forced a modification of incentive plans drafted for the board of United Utilities.

Mr Hampson told the conference that if shareholders felt aggrieved they should think how employees felt.

The John Lewis Partnership, which has a unique corporate structure based on employees having a stake in the company, last month paid £82 million in a bonus to its 36,000 staff. Every member of staff, from directors to shopfloor workers, received a payment worth 20 per cent of his or her salary.



Reports by
Philip Bassett and
Christine Buckley

Greenbury report hasn't put the matter to bed. It's just led to repackaging. The £1 million-a-year club continues to recruit new members as long-term incentive plans trip in."

Mr Hampson, whose own organisation operates a profit-sharing scheme, said if generous pay was deserved by directors then it was also deserved by workers further down the line who had also helped the performance of the company.

He said: "I firmly believe we need to find a greater sense of



Stuart Hampson called for greater fairness in setting pay for bosses and employees

Survey highlights problem of short-sighted companies

A SIGNIFICANT majority of Britain's businesses believe that companies are too short-term in their outlook.

More than 86 per cent of bosses in an IoD poll said short-termism was a problem for UK business. But the directors also held up their hands as being guilty of not looking far enough ahead when planning business strategies. More than 61 per cent said short-termism was a problem in their own companies.

Tim Melville-Ross, Director-General of the IoD, said: "An

organisation cannot become truly competitive unless it looks forward to see where new competitive threats, and opportunities, are coming from.

IoD members were told that a survey by the Society of Practitioners in Insolvency indicated that nearly a quarter of all business collapses are directly attributable to a lack of strategic planning and poor management. Another study had shown that new businesses were more likely to grow rapidly if they spent more time planning activities.

Mr Melville-Ross said short-termism could be tackled by a greater use of non-executive directors and outside business advice.

Skills gaps in the boardroom were also held up as a major problem. More than 80 per cent said skills gaps among directors were a serious obstacle for British business, while 55 per cent said it was a problem in their own companies. A lack of financial awareness has been held up as the biggest difficulty in directors' training and expertise.

Labour's plans on minimum wage 'nonsense'

TIM Melville-Ross, Director-General of the Institute of Directors, launched a stinging attack on Labour just a week before polling day.

Mr Melville-Ross told conference that a minimum wage would cause unemployment and be inflationary, and that plans for trade union recognition would stoke the fires of industrial discord. He also said business feared higher corporation taxes because of Labour's commitment to restraint on personal taxation.

The broadside from the head of one of industry's main organisations will be a blow to a Labour Party that has worked to make itself more business friendly and had constant dialogue on its policies with the IoD.

Mr Melville-Ross condemned as economic and social nonsense Labour's plans for a national minimum wage. Implementation of a minimum wage would trigger an increase in unemployment and would focus the "help" to those who least needed it by benefiting better-off families. He refused to be drawn into saying at what level the minimum wage should be set.

The IoD leader said Labour reassurances that changes to union law in the 1980s would not be dismantled had been damaged by its promise of trade union recognition in workplaces where more than 50 per cent of employees demanded it. The opportunity for more trade union intervention "clearly could be extremely worrying", he said.

Mr Melville-Ross told conference: "We had rather than the point that the 1980s reforms would not be reversed." Now there was talk of compulsory recognition of trade unions, which would create the opportunity for more union intervention, he said. Lord Young of Gifford, president of the IoD, underlined business fears of higher taxation. Once all the areas Labour had promised not to tax were removed, he said, the options narrowed and business was in the firing line.

Court go-ahead for Norwich Union float

THE Norwich Union flotation giving nearly two million policyholders free shares worth an average of £1,000 has been approved by the High Court. Sir Richard Scott, the Vice-Chancellor, said that none of the four objectors he heard had persuaded him against sanctioning the scheme. He added that 98.8 per cent of Norwich Union members in the UK had voted for the mutual society to become a limited company. The result was announced last Friday after the mutual held an extraordinary general meeting at the London Arena.

Sir Richard said that people who wanted to be members of a mutual society might well have reason to be aggrieved at the prospect of having to become shareholders of a limited company, but it was not a point that could be allowed to stand in the way of sanctioning the proposed transfer. The flotation of the 200-year-old insurer is planned for June and about 1.3 billion free shares will be distributed to members. Norwich Union is raising £1.75 billion on the stock market. The new plc will be worth up to £5 billion.

PIA fines firm £70,000

THE Personal Investment Authority fined Berkeley Independent Advisers of Manor Road, Coventry, £70,000 plus £15,000 costs for failing to "have adequate procedures and resources" to monitor how its sales force were investigating pensions cases. The review was ordered after clients were wrongly advised to leave an employer's scheme in favour of private pensions. The PIA said Berkeley had admitted failing "to take all reasonable steps" to ensure its representative firms conducted pensions reviews in accordance with PIA standards.

Kvaerner jobs saved

KVAERNER, the Norwegian engineering group that owns Govan shipyard, said that fewer redundancies than planned were needed at the Clyde yard after winning a £27 million contract from Toisa Ltd to build two platform supply vessels, with an option for two more. Kvaerner said the work is "timely and will help us to sustain many jobs at the yard until the summer of 1998". It added that Kvaerner Govan still needs to secure further significant orders, and its competitive edge is not helped by the strength of currency.

DuPont tops \$1bn

DUPONT, the US chemical firm, reported a rise in first-quarter net income to \$1.02 billion, from \$879 million. Earnings rose to a quarterly record of \$1.80 a share, up from \$1.57. The company said that while sales volumes were strong in both the chemicals and specialties sectors, selling prices were down because of a stronger dollar. Combined sales for the chemicals and specialties divisions were an adjusted \$5.9 billion, up 3 per cent. Petroleum sales were \$5.4 billion, up 15 per cent over last year.

CDs hit Mayking

MAYKING, the CD and cassette manufacturer that employs 360 people at its plant in Battersea, south west London, has gone into administration. Nigel Ruddock and Ipe Jacob, of Robson Rhodes, the chartered accountants, are now running the business, which includes Mayking Multi-Media and Mayking Cassettes. No job losses are expected. Mayking, which has a turnover of more than £30 million, has recently made investments of about £20 million, but low prices and overcapacity have led the company to accrue significant levels of debt.

Flat first half at Siemens

SIEMENS, the German engineering group, reported flat profits of DM1.08 billion for the six months to September 30. First-half sales rose to DM44.7 billion, against DM42.3 billion the previous year. The company now plans to divest more non-core businesses than it had expected two months ago. Siemens expects to sell, or put into joint ventures, businesses with annual sales totalling about DM5.5 billion. A spokesman said: "We are following a strategy to strengthen our portfolio. It is a process that continues — buying and selling."

TOURIST RATES

Bank	Bank	Bank	Bank
Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	2.19	Malta	0.959
Austria Sch	20.57	Netherlands Gld	3.319
Belgium Fl	80.85	New Zealand \$	2.50
Canada \$	2.392	Norway Kr	12.02
Cyprus Cyp	0.872	Portugal Esc	203.50
Denmark L	11.18	S Africa Rd	7.50
Finland Mkk	5.94	Spain Ptas	246.50
France F	9.85	Sweden Kr	13.25
Germany Dm	2.74	Switzerland Fr	2.52
Greece Dr	4.62	Taiwan Nts	226.50
Hong Kong \$	13.37	USA \$	1.730
Iceland	107		
Ireland P	1.10		
Israel Sh	5.83		
Italy Lit	205		
Japan Yen	219.30		

Notes for small denomination notes supplied by Barclays Bank. Other rates apply to invoice's cheque, unless at other bank's discretion.

Rates for small denomination bank notes supplied by Barclays Bank. Other rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

SCOTTISH WIDOWS' FUND AND LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 183rd Annual General Meeting of the members of the Society will be held within the Sidlaw Auditorium, Edinburgh International Conference Centre, The Exchange, Edinburgh EH3 8EE on Tuesday 6 May 1997 at 11.30am for the following purposes:

- To consider the Accounts and Balance Sheets for the year ended 31 December 1996 and the Reports of the Directors and Auditors.
- To elect or re-elect Directors.
- To fix the remuneration of Directors.
- To re-appoint Price Waterhouse as Auditors.
- To authorise the Directors to fix the remuneration of the Auditors for the current year.
- To transact any other ordinary business proper to an Annual General Meeting.

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T B Houston SSC
Group Legal Adviser and Secretary
15 Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh EH16 5BU

3 April 1997

Microsoft failed to see importance of Internet

MICROSOFT, the world's leading software company, yesterday admitted missing the importance of the Internet.

The company acknowledged that it had to turn round its entire organisation within days after it failed to realise the importance to the computer industry and its own business of the hundreds of thousands of linked computers which constitute the Internet.

Having managed to dominate the PC software market with products such as Windows, Word, Excel and Word, Microsoft failed to see the full potential of the Internet, and saw competitor companies such as Netscape move in and

become market leaders in terms of providing software for Internet access.

David Svendsen, Microsoft's managing director, emphasised that his company's employees needed a combination of technological skill and entrepreneurial flair, and had to respond quickly to customer needs and execute the best marketing ideas.

He said: "Even the most entrepreneurial company makes mistakes. Microsoft very nearly misjudged the growing importance of the Internet. We spun on a sixpence, or five cents, to reorganise our whole global organisation within days."

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

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LEGAL NOTICES

HARRISON INVESTMENT LIMITED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 183rd Annual General Meeting of the members of the Society will be held within the Sidlaw Auditorium, Edinburgh International Conference Centre, The Exchange, Edinburgh EH3 8EE on Tuesday 6 May 1997 at 11.30am for the following purposes:

- To consider the Accounts and Balance Sheets for the year ended 31 December 1996 and the Reports of the Directors and Auditors.
- To elect or re-elect Directors.
- To fix the remuneration of Directors.
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□ IoD leaders need not preach □ Football as a game of more than two halves □ Eurotunnel price still in the dark

No profit in the directors' pulpit

THE tickets for the Institute of Directors annual shindig yesterday failed to carry the instruction that halves should be worn, but a disturbing air of sanctimony hovered over the platform.

Stuart Hampson, the John Lewis partner who is more equal than the others, was there to berate industry's fat cats and call for "fairness". The Institute's director-general, Tim Melville-Ross, bumbled on about the need for "honesty, openness, trust and integrity" in business. It was only the robust presence of Lord Young, the entrepreneurially inclined former Industry Minister, which provided reassurance that perhaps the IoD has not entirely renounced the profit motive.

With an imminent election and the uncertainties that brings, the business community might hope that in the IoD it could rely on an informed and eloquent advocate. On yesterday's showing, some members may now be considering whether their subscription is really necessary. Melville-Ross's intemperance, and unscripted, outburst against Labour policy may have enlivened proceedings, but it was hardly constructive. On its strength, he is hardly likely to be invited round for tea and cakes at number ten on a regular basis.

But his scripted contribution was equally unhelpful. If the boss of the IoD feels it necessary

to ask his members whether they believe it matters that the values of honesty, openness, trust and integrity be applied in business, then he should surely find another cause to support.

There is little comfort to be had from the fact that 97.5 per cent of his audience pressed their buzzers to record that they indeed believe such values matter. Would the brave 2.5 per cent please identify themselves and explain the thinking behind their own enterprises?

Apart from their ethics, Melville-Ross cast doubt on the financial abilities of British businessmen. They were, he said, suffering from a skills shortage.

Apart from trying to sell some of the IoD's various distance learning packages, the aim of his speech seemed to be to launch business on a glorified public relations drive.

The prospect of teams of directors going into schools to sell the idea that business is good seems likely to win few admirers if their message is couched in similar vein to yesterday's speeches.

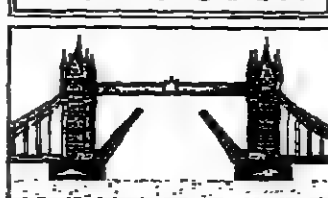
The majority of Britain's businessmen know exactly what their role is and are striving to fulfil it. They do not need Stuart Hampson to tell them not to be greedy or Tim Melville-Ross to tell them to be honest.

They may, however, benefit from having a strong voice to speak on their behalf, particularly with an incoming government. And if that voice does reach the ear of the next administration it should find better things to whinge about than a lack of equity capital. If Melville-Ross still believes in the existence of an equity gap, he is misinformed as well as misguided.

Play the teams that know their goals

THE "so called" football sector has a market capitalisation of less than half the smallest sector of the FT Actuaries Index — textiles and apparel — and has raised only £200 million from investors so far. Yet there is a plethora of City analysts who have turned into football gurus, from Nick Knight, the

PENNINGTON



head of strategy at Nomura, downwards.

But however much you try and turn the analysis of football investment into a science, the fact is the bloke who sells you *The Times* in the morning probably has more insight into whether you should buy one football stock rather than another. Look at the recent collapse of Sunderland's share price as it plummeted towards the Premiership relegation zone — and the rally in Southampton's price as it scrambled towards safety. When Sunderland floated we were told that relegation was already discounted. If so, why are the shares now nearly a pound below the offer price? And why should a goal by Southampton's Egil

Ostenstad take 7.5 per cent off Sunderland's share price and put it on Southampton's?

The only safe investments in this sector are the football stocks with a proper income flow, where performance on the field is the king, not the cake. Manchester United's performance against Borussia Dortmund last night will have little effect on its medium-term cash flow. The stadium sells out every week, the merchandise income flows in and should anyone want to start a European super-league, United will be invited to join. UBS reckons such an invitation could add £15 million a year to the club's profits.

Who else qualifies in the quality stakes? Newcastle United, because of its fantastic home support, Tottenham Hotspur and Aston Villa, solid Premiership clubs with good commercial management, and Burnley. Leamington, which has realised that being a middle-ranking club is not enough to be worth a listing and is setting about finding other ways of making money. Quoted clubs in the

lower reaches of the Premiership and the top part of the first Division should look and learn. Football is not enough.

Tunnelling towards the light

THE ways of French fishermen, like French farmers and French politicians, are hard for the Anglo-Saxon mind to fathom sometimes, but some of the former must surely have a soft spot for Eurotunnel. Their horrendous blockades of cross-Channel ferries this week will have highlighted again the attractions of the tunnel.

The markets have been fed with well-grounded rumours for the past couple of weeks that today's 1996 figures would provide positive news on refinancing. Indeed so. Forecasts for Eurotunnel have always been a raggy game, but the company has a chance of agreeing the financial restructuring with banks and shareholders by the first anniversary of its first being announced, in October. This is not to say it will be easy;

those French shareholders, without wishing to sound too chauvinistic, share a similar militant mind-set with their fishermen. But they will eventually have to accept the dilution of their shares that will give the banks half the company.

The 30-odd steering banks agree that the refinancing should take place. Of the other 200, most must want out, and the secondary debt market planned by the big banks will facilitate this. Some analysis believe that the tunnel, ahead of the interest burden, was profitable in the second half of last year, despite the fire. All well and good, but those of a strictly logical, Cartesian mind should not think too hard about the nonsense that is Eurotunnel's current share price.

Gas blast

CLARE Sportswode has rallied to Centrica, the successor to British Gas that supplies the stuff. From the woman who did more than most to bring the company to its current state, this seems a case of too little, too late. She believes Centrica, as a non-monopoly, should not be hit with a Labour windfall tax. Logically, the entire burden should fall on the other half, BG, owner of the TransCo monopoly. Shareholders, please note — your regulator is not finished with you yet.



James Radcliffe, left, and Derek Stott, joint chairmen of Laytons Wine Merchants which has been acquired by its managers for an undisclosed sum from Graham Chidgey, the owner for 32 years. The business has an annual turnover of £7 million, and the buyout was backed by NatWest.

Missing millions hit Molins shares

By FRASER NELSON

SHARES of Molins suffered their sharpest one-day fall in ten years after the packaging machinery group said it had uncovered a £7.4 million hole in its accounts.

The company has sent in KPMG, its auditors, to investigate Langston, its corrugated board machinery business in the US, after discovering that the division's profits had been overstated by some \$12 million over several years.

It has already fired Walt Beville and Len Maynes, two Americans in charge of the business, replacing them with managers from the UK. Both executives were on a profits-related bonus scheme that could add a further 30 per cent to their salaries.

Michael Orr, chairman, said there was no suggestion that any cash had been embezzled but said there could be a

gulf between the actual and reported value of Langston's stock. He said: "We ran a bonus scheme like most US companies, which could have provided some motivation in doing this."

Langston reported a profit of £3.7 million for 1996, 15 per cent of group total. It is understood that £1.85 million of this was overstated, and that the missing £5.55 million could have been pencilled in over a period that could stretch as far back as ten years. KPMG is due to submit a full report by July.

Mr Orr attempted to calm market nerves by saying that 40 per cent of the overstated profits could be reclaimed through tax rebates. However, the shares plunged 97p to a two-year low of 645p.

Tempus, page 30

ASB seeks derivatives disclosure

By ROBERT BRUCE

THE Accountancy Standards Board is set to oblige companies to disclose their use of derivatives and financial instruments.

Today it publishes its financial reporting exposure draft on the subject, which unexpectedly suggests the new rules should be mandatory. When it published its views in discussion form last year a majority of respondents argued that the rules should be for guidance only.

The new rules, which are expected to come into force next year, would apply to all bank and insurance companies and all other companies which have a capital instrument listed on a UK market. Accountancy, page 32

Bank of Scotland rules out building society buy

By ROBERT MILLER, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

BANK OF SCOTLAND yesterday ruled out the takeover of a building society, claiming they had become too expensive. Peter Burt, chief executive said: "We have deep pockets but very short arms. Societies are expensive for what you get at the moment."

The bank, which is also frequently talked about as a possible takeover target for Royal Bank of Scotland, yesterday set out its stall for

independence by reporting a 22 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £664.1 million for the year to February 28.

Mr Burt said he was building a network that could remain effective for at least 15 years. His aims were to keep shareholders and customers happy.

The final dividend is lifted to 5.31p (4.40p), payable on June 20. This raises the total annual dividend 20 per cent to 8.22p.

While the UK, which con-

tributed 87 per cent of the bank's profits at £536.8 million, still accounts for the bedrock of the BoS business, Australasia is starting to make its mark even though the BankWest acquisition has yet to live up to expectations. It made a pre-tax profit of \$4150.1 million (£69.5 million), \$9.8 million below its forecast.

Mr Burt said the profit shortfall arose mainly from unprecedented competition

and the consequent pressure on margins in the West Australian home loans market.

In New Zealand, the Countrywide Banking Corporation reported a 36 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to NZ\$82.8 million (£34.1 million), while total assets were up 15 per cent at NZ\$7.5 billion, mainly on the back of retail mortgages.

Of the other BoS businesses, Bank of Wales saw profits rise to £14 million although this included an exceptional gain of £7.4 million from the sale of Forthright Finance to NWS Bank. Without the one-off sale item profits were up 120 per cent to £6.6 million.

NWS Bank, a BoS flagship, reported pre-tax profits of £131.5 million, compared with £127 million in the same period last year.

Mr Burt believes the decision to link up with Saintbury's Bank, which said this week that it had recruited more than 100,000 customers who deposited more than £100 million, has vindicated his stand not to overpay for a building society branch network.

When the joint venture with the supermarket chain rolls out in the South East next month Mr Burt believes that the number of customers might double.

Tempus, page 30
City Diary, page 31

Buoyant figures give lift to Commercial Union shares

By MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

SHARES of Commercial Union rose yesterday on the back of buoyant new business figures that confirmed an upturn in worldwide demand for long-term savings products.

General Accident, a fellow composite insurer, also rose strongly after a positive trading statement at its annual meeting. By the market's close, CU shares had increased 13p to 653p, while those of GA were up 20½p to 831½p.

Analysts were encouraged by predictions from Lord Airlie, chairman of GA, that

first-quarter figures for 1997, to be announced on May 13, would show much improved trading results over 1996.

At CU, worldwide new business increased 25 per cent to £833 million in the first three months of 1997, while sales of investment products rose to £85 million, up 12 per cent.

In the UK, single premium sales more than trebled to £153 million, reflecting healthy sales of investment bonds and individual pensions.

However, new annual premiums were down 4 per cent to £11 million, with a 22 per

cent increase in individual pension sales being offset by lower group pension business.

Worldwide, new annual premiums were 28 per cent higher at £74 million, while sales of single premium products rose 27 per cent to £694 million. The worst performing market was France, where a reorganisation of the life salesforce and the product range affected new business and market conditions were less buoyant than in the comparable period last year.

Tempus, page 30

Prince buys restaurant stake

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

PRINCE al-Waleed bin Talal is teaming up with Hollywood stars, including Sylvester Stallone and Demi Moore, to launch the Planet Hollywood theme restaurant chain across Europe and the Middle East.

The Prince, billionaire nephew of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, has won the right to develop 34 new restaurants in cities ranging from Brussels to Istanbul.

He has also acquired regional rights to the Official All Star Café, Planet Hollywood's new sports-themed restaurant chain which has won the backing of Andre Agassi, Monica Seles and Tiger

Woods. The prince will take a 1 per cent stake in Planet Hollywood International stock.

Robert Earl, founder and president of Planet Hollywood, floated the company on Nasdaq last year, with financial backing from leading Hollywood stars. Shares in the company rose from an \$18 opening price to a high of more than \$28. But the price has since crumbled over fears that a deal to develop casinos and hotels with ITT Sheraton will be shelved following Hilton's takeover bid for the Sheraton chain.

Planet Hollywood is also facing stiff

competition from the rival Hard Rock chain — which Mr Earl also founded, but which is now controlled by The Rank Group. But Mr Earl insisted yesterday that the new deal marked a significant step forward in expanding the Planet Hollywood concept internationally.

In recent months the Prince has purchased six of the Princess chain of hotels from Loro for £350 million. He has also taken 5 per cent stakes in TransWorld Airlines and Apple, the computer company, and bought the George V Hotel in Paris from Granada for £104 million.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Carpet shares have rug pulled from under them

THE slowdown in the housing market and the uncertainty created by the General Election are causing problems for the big-ticket retailers.

ABN Amro House Govett, the leading stockbroker, says carpet shops are among the worst hit along with the furniture retailers.

Lord Harris of Peckham's fast-growing Carpetright led the way down with a fall of 42.5p at 480p, along with Allied Carpets, 7.5p off at 244p. DFS Furniture, which delivered impressive profit numbers on Tuesday, added another 2.5p at 652p, supported by some bullish comments from NatWest Securities. This pushed off an MFI Furniture, 1.5p up at 139.5p.

Matthew Siebert at Hoare Govett did the damage yesterday. He told clients that these retailers were highly geared to top-line sales and if those sales failed to materialise, it would have a major effect on the bottom line. Carpetright would be the worst hit. Its sales would take longer to recover because they were at the lower end of the market.

He calculates that every 1 per cent decline in like-for-like sales would mean a 5 per cent reduction in pre-tax profits. As a result, he has cut his profit forecast for Allied Carpets by £1 million to £17 million for this year, followed by a further reduction of £1 million to £21 million in 1998.

He is sticking with his April year-end forecast for Carpetright of £34 million, but has reduced next year by £2 million to £41.5 million. He is unmoved at £38 million for DFS this year, but has cut next by £2 million to £47 million. He expects £74 million from MFI this year, but has topped £3 million off next year's £85 million.

"People are not moving or doing up their houses. March housing transactions were still below those of March 1995," he said.

But he continues to look for signs of a recovery in the final quarter. "The outlook does look better once the election is out of the way. The Budget in November should be consumer friendly," he adds.

Share prices in London responded positively to the surge overnight on Wall Street, which saw the Dow enjoy its second biggest one-day gain.

There was little response to the latest call by Eddie



Laura Ashley shares fell 5.1p ahead of figures today

George, Governor of the Bank of England, for another rise in interest rates, published in the March minutes of the monthly economic meeting with the Chancellor.

But with New York opening on a cautious note, prices in London closed below their best of the day. The FT-SE 100 index touched 4,396.1 before closing 41.6 higher at 4,387.7.

THE speculators put in a show at MEPC, helping to raise the price 9p to 479p. Several lines of stock went through late in trading, including 150,000 at 480p and 100,000 at 480p. Once again, there is talk of a possible bid from rival Hammerson, 1.5p firmer at 431.5p. MEPC is valued at £1.96 billion.

A total of 578 million shares changed hands.

ICI stood out with a jump of 19p at 720.5p ahead of first-quarter figures later today, with SBC Warburg reckoned to have picked up 800,000 shares at a 10p premium to the ruling market price. These figures are expected to mark a low point in the group's fortunes, with pre-tax profits tumbling from £202 million to

£75 million. Elsewhere in the sector, BOC Group rose 10.5p to 918p and Kallan 4p to 130.5p.

News of a bid approach saw Cullens touch 26.5p before settling just 1.5p firmer at 24p. At these levels the food retailer is valued at just £6 million.

Laura Ashley dropped 5.1p to 145p after a line of 3.29 million shares passed through

at 64.5p. The group, which makes machinery for tobacco manufacturers, has uncovered financial irregularities at its US subsidiary overstating its profits last year by £7.4 million.

A profits warnings also took its toll of Eurodis Electron, down 37p at 133.5p.

Schroders resumed 47.5p to £15.72p, with BZW said to be urging clients to switch out of Mercury Asset Management, up 26.5p to £12.97p.

The Hosiery Bank does not look like having much of an impact on Hozelock, where the price jumped 45.5p to 425.5p on the back of its latest trading update.

The figures from Exxon on Monday, revealing a stronger than expected performance from its downstream operations, set the wires buzzing.

Tony Alvis, oil analyst at Henderson Crosthwaite, the broker, says the producers have struggled to make money out of their refining and marketing interests.

The sharp rise in the oil price earlier this year only added to the problem, squeezing margins further. "But the message from Exxon was positive."

He continues to recommend Shell, 18.5p dearer at £10.84 ahead of those first-quarter figures. NatWest Securities, the broker, is looking for net income to be virtually unchanged on the last quarter at £1.3 billion, but down 17 per cent on the £1.6 billion last year.

Others to go better yesterday included BP, 11p to 715p, Enterprise Oil, 7.5p to 619p, and Hardy Oil & Gas, 5p to 296.5p.

GILTED-EDGED: A weaker pound and falls on other European bond markets meant that London was unable to hold on to earlier gains inspired by a subdued set of retail sales. The auction for £2 billion of Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was comfortably 3.49 times oversubscribed.

The June series of the long gilt finished 1.5p better at £109.73, as 42,000 contracts were completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 added five ticks at £102.4, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was off a tick at £102.13.

NEW YORK: In the morning shares were mostly flat, with trading confined to a band around Tuesday's closing levels. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 10.83 points higher at 6,822.76.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	6822.76 (+10.83)
S&P Composite	775.31 (+0.70)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	10735.47 (+191.63)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	12707.04 (+126.19)
Amsterdam:	
Euro Index	758.94 (+10.29)
Sydney:	
ASX	2472.3 (+24.7)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	3395.95 (+55.62)
Singapore:	
Strait Times	2034.80 (+12.74)
Brussels:	
General	1230.50 (+26.54)
Paris:	
CAC-40	2533.64 (+18.97)
Zurich:	
SMI	985.70 (+3.60)
London:	
FT-100	4387.7 (+41.6)
FTSE 250	4528.4 (+15.1)
FTSE 350	2152.7 (+17.1)
FTSE 1000	230.74 (+17.16)
FTSE All Share	211.13 (+16.48)
FTSE Non Financials	217.07 (+13.57)
FTSE Fixed Interest	116.87 (+0.09)
FTSE Govt Secs	93.67 (+0.04)
SEAG Volume	49758
US\$	1.6333 (+0.0157)
German Mark	2.7807 (+0.0034)
Exchange Index	94.1 (-0.06)
Bank of England official base rate	4.75%
ESCU	1.4386
ESDR	1.00
155.4 Mar (2.74%) Jan 1997-100	100
155.4 Mar (2.74%) Jan 1997-100	100

RECENT ISSUES

Alliance & Leicester	545	+12
Aurora Inv Trust	100	...
Avalon Oil	80p	...
Aviva Europe	129p	...
Bickerton	39p	...
Charlton Athletic	37p	+1
Close Bros PVT	95	...
Donatantonio	74p	...
Harvey Nash	193p	+3
Real's	212p	...
Meitwen's	48	...
NMT (50)	50p	+2
Newcastle Utd	124	+3
Northstar Secs	28p	...
Oxford Tech Venture	95	...
Siber Energy	15p	...
Soccer Investments	102p	...
Torch Hldgs	107p	...
United Overseas Grp	61p	...
Worldsec	177	...

RIGHTS ISSUES

Ask Central n/p (160)	35
Break for Bdr n/p (51)	14
Edge Props n/p (135)	18p
Luminar n/p (230)	51p
Pemberton n/p (18)	3

MAJOR CHANGES

REISS:	
Mentals	138p (+11p)
Mileage Secs	180p (+11p)
Telecoms Co	185p (+10p)
Laird (A)	363p (+18p)
BTG	652p (+31p)
Hays	500p (+20p)
Royal & Sun AI	460p (+18p)
Sage Co	682p (+21p)
Caltech	575p (+17p)
Laporte	684p (+18p)
Ryck Secs	565p (+13p)
FALLS:	
Eurodis Elect	133p (-37p)
Molins	645p (-97p)
Caplight	480p (-42p)
Ramondens (H)	372p (-20p)
MAID	223p (-9p)
Johnson Matth	505p (-11p)
Grampian	251p (-10p)
Filecom Com	317p (-10p)
Southern News	760p (-10p)

Closing Prices Page 35

TEMPUS

Burt's canny Scots

STICKING to the knitting has much to recommend it as a business philosophy. Just look at what Peter Burt has achieved at Bank of Scotland. No nasty black holes from trading in esoteric, or downright dangerous, derivatives and a 52.5 per cent cost-to-income ratio that should be the envy of all its major competitors bar the Abbey National.

But perhaps canniest of all is the way in which BoS has overcome the lack of a branch network. This was perceived as essential to any bank intent on becoming a big wheel in retail financial services. Not so BoS. It simply did a deal with Sainsbury's and, hey presto, in just eight weeks the new Sainsbury's Bank, in which BoS has a 45 per cent stake, signed up more than 100,000 customers who deposited £100 million. And the best is yet to come. The new bank will display its wares in the South

East in mid-May when it might reasonably expect to double the size of the business and serve as a useful entrée into the home and personal loan markets.

If critics were to point to the fact that BankWest, the West Australian bank, failed to meet even its prospectus targets, the answer from Burt would likely be "so what?". BoS can use the bank as a base from which to launch a nationwide telephone banking operation. Perth, the state capital, is nearer to Singapore than Sydney, and many Singaporeans now have holiday homes in West Australia. Get the picture? The market may have only marked up the shares 1.5p at 338.5p. But then you could probably buy BoS shares and go away for five years safe in the knowledge that it would most likely outperform its bigger and swankier brethren.

Molins

OH DEAR. Whatever it is to become of Molins? The once proud makers of cigarette rolling machines has had what can only be described as a dreadful few months. And to hear the depressed sounds coming out of the City, the expectations are that things can only get worse.

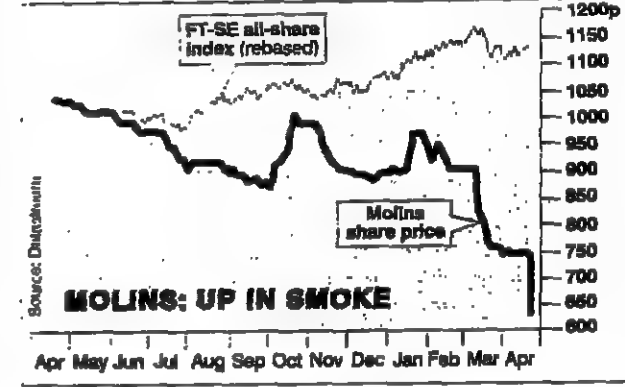
The trouble with Molins is that no one is particularly excited about its core business. Even the guys who run the company have given up smoking. And it is no good telling everyone that the Chinese are still puffing away like Thomas the Tank Engine when they read about the massive payouts being contemplated by the likes of BAT and Philip Morris. The invention of pyramidal tea bags should have brought it a boost, but that was not considered enough.

That is why Molins decided to surge into the US. But it is all going horribly wrong.

First it loses an eight-year court battle to protect its patents. Then the strong pound hit just as Molins was expanding on the other side of the pond. Now it finds that one of its subsidiaries has been oversteering its profits and has asked Price

Waterhouse and KPMG to find out what is going on.

Inevitably, the market has over-reacted. Taking another 13 per cent off the share price in minimal trading means the Molins stock is down a third since the misery started. But there is still a decent core business, if a little dull. Treat this bad news as a buying opportunity.



MOLINS: UP IN SMOKE

CU

WHILE all around, insurers are rushing to make bids for the handful of remaining mutuals left in the wild, Commercial Union is sitting on its hands.

CU has expressed reservations about "buying at the top of the bull market" in the UK. This is in spite of rumours that Eagle Star, owner of Eagle Star, were in talks last year over combining operations in a rapidly consolidating insurance industry.

Although there is still plenty of opportunity for CU to join in the bidding, it has been far from idle in the interim. New products in Poland and Italy have pushed up sales of long-term life business. And although volumes are still relatively small, these provide a balance to the difficulties experienced by CU in France, where it has its biggest exposure.

CU's French operations are now more than twice of those in the UK. If the French

business looks weak at present, it is only in comparison with a very good 1996.

France still pulled in £357 million worth of new single premiums as opposed to a mere £153 million in the UK.

CU's strategy to look to Europe and beyond for profits may seem contrary to insurers fixated with pulling off the best deal in the UK. Nevertheless, a 25 per cent worldwide increase in new business shows CU's policy of diversification means it can balance difficulties in one country with rapid growth in another. An attractive combination.

Umeco

UMECO, we are told, is in the process of regeneration. Passing the baton from one generation to the next. From the directors that brought you the surge in Burnfield's shares behind a new Umeco.

Lovers of the old Umeco might be feeling uncomfortable. The company has so far made its fortune on the strength of a steady management style - which led to yesterday's apparent acquisition from heaven.

The company has so far made its fortune on the strength of a steady management style - which led to yesterday's apparent acquisition from heaven.

Enter Brian McGowan, former chairman of Burnfield and current chairman of House of Fraser. Rather than being dazzled by the former, shareholders would do well to cast an eye towards the latter. As befits the young Turk he once was, McGowan is talking of an aggressive expansion strategy. This smacks of either high leverage or consistent cash calls, and a break from the considered approach.

McGowan has his fans, and yesterday's surge in share price shows their fervor. For the undecided, McGowan leaves two examples: Burnfield, which shot to fame before Farley bid for it, and House of Fraser, which has been an unmitigated disaster from start to finish. Be cautious.



STRIKING IT RICH AT LAST

FTSE 350 oil exploration and production price index

FT-SE all-share index (rebased)

Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr

Source: DataStream

FTSE 350 oil exploration and production price index

FT-SE all-share index (rebased)

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FT-SE all-share index (rebased)

Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr

Cynical silence over tax burden portends worst of all worlds



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

Liberal Democrats, to their credit, have tried to be honest about tax. A penny on the standard rate of income tax would pay for small, defined improvements in education. A few pence on a packet of fags would finance limited cuts in health charges. Compared with new Labour's last-ditch attempt to purloin surpluses in the National Lottery to make its fiscal sums come out, this looks like a shining example of playing fair with the electorate.

Beyond that lowly standard, the most charitable view is that Paddy Ashdown is playing the game with greater integrity than his rivals. The idea of linking tax measures directly to proposals for extra spending — the dreaded and rightly maligned concept of hypothecation — is essentially a sideshow because it operates only at the margin. Liberals have adopted it because nothing better is deemed to be within the grasp of electors. More accurately, television and radio producers and newspaper editors have decided that voters cannot scan the bigger picture.

The bigger picture is crucial to Britain's future. The two main parties, as if by mutual consent, draw a discreet veil over it. Tories want to cut taxes but know that their intentions have little recent credibility. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has correctly exposed the gap between their good intentions and their manifesto commitments. On this analysis, gratefully accepted by Labour, the tax cuts implicit in the Treasury's Red Book forecasts are unlikely to be realised.

Labour knows that higher taxes do not win elections. The first Budget of a Labour Chancellor

would directly raise the tax burden — possibly above 40 per cent — by levying the utility tax. That will mainly be a burden on utilities' nine million shareholders but will also cut their non-regulated investment in the economy.

Both parties are stuck with a grudging and secret consensus that the total tax burden will stay a touch short of the 40 per cent of national income currently devoted to government spending. This issue should be vital to the fiscal debate, if only it were acknowledged. But it is not. Tories want voters to think they will not raise it. Labour wants voters to think they will not raise it. Failing some unlikely and risky monetary plan to join the euro at the first opportunity, it is more likely that the tax burden will rise modestly over the next couple of years.

Tax and spending are intimately linked. The need to raise taxes to pay for spending seems obvious. The impact of taxes on public spending is just as important, especially when there is little prospect of changing the aggregate total.

In spending, the critical question is how to switch resources from welfare handouts to public services. In taxation, the critical question is how

to distribute the burden to best advantage. The two are inevitably connected. Cuts in income tax on low incomes should yield a direct and substantial offset in public spending cuts just as, in the opposite direction, imposition of VAT on fuel required an offsetting boost to pensions for those for whom domestic is a disproportionately big expense. Any switch to taxes such as VAT that raise the cost of living is malign because it increases public spending on

pensions and welfare benefits linked to the retail price index. Labour's plan to cut domestic fuel tax is in that sense welcome. It would doubtless be permitted by the European Commission in exchange for political concessions.

The tax burden is unlikely to fall under the Tories and will surely rise under Labour. The election should therefore focus on how best to distribute that burden. The principles are simple. Taxes should distort activity as little as possible unless they are meant to, as with drink and tobacco duties. No taxes are welcome. Low rates of tax, such as stamp duties and Kenneth Clarke's imposts on insurance and air travel, are the best.

The total tax burden is so high, however, that distortions are inevitable. These should therefore be directed towards public policy objectives. A switch from Employees' National Insurance Contributions to corporation tax would directly promote employment with no net cost to the corporate sector. Motor taxes, likewise, should promote environmental objectives.

Given the automatic link between consumer prices and public spending, direct taxes are generally better than taxes on the sort of spending

most families are committed to. Both parties should therefore be happy to appease the EU by aiming to cut the main VAT rate to 15 per cent.

How ludicrous, therefore, that both Tories and new Labour, for different reasons, are committed to lower rates of tax on incomes. Do they take electors for morons? Any tax over 50 per cent is bound to distort behaviour. The Tory drive to cut income tax rates is, however, as much of a confidence trick in the context as Labour's proposal of a 10 per cent basis rate. In order to minimise benefit spending, basic income tax allowances should be higher and allowances should be given for family responsibilities. Realistically, this is impossible unless marginal rates of tax are raised at the top end of the scale, even though many higher-rate taxpayers would not actually pay more tax.

If Labour is to raise more tax, which is likely if the dividends from spending financed by the utility tax prove sluggish, the need to levy low rates to disturb economic activity as little as possible will be paramount. A 1 per cent levy on credit card transactions would, for instance, be infinitely preferable to attacks on pension fund tax allowances, which are likely to have a perverse impact on revenue and saving.

Since 1979, distribution of tax has sometimes been inspired, as in cuts in absurd top income tax rates and corporation tax allowances. Just as often it has been perverse, subordinating economic efficiency to short-term political appeal. Judging from the electoral debate so far, even worse is to come.

New contender CWC enters the ring to square up to BT

Eric Reguly looks into an upcoming big prize fight in the telecoms industry

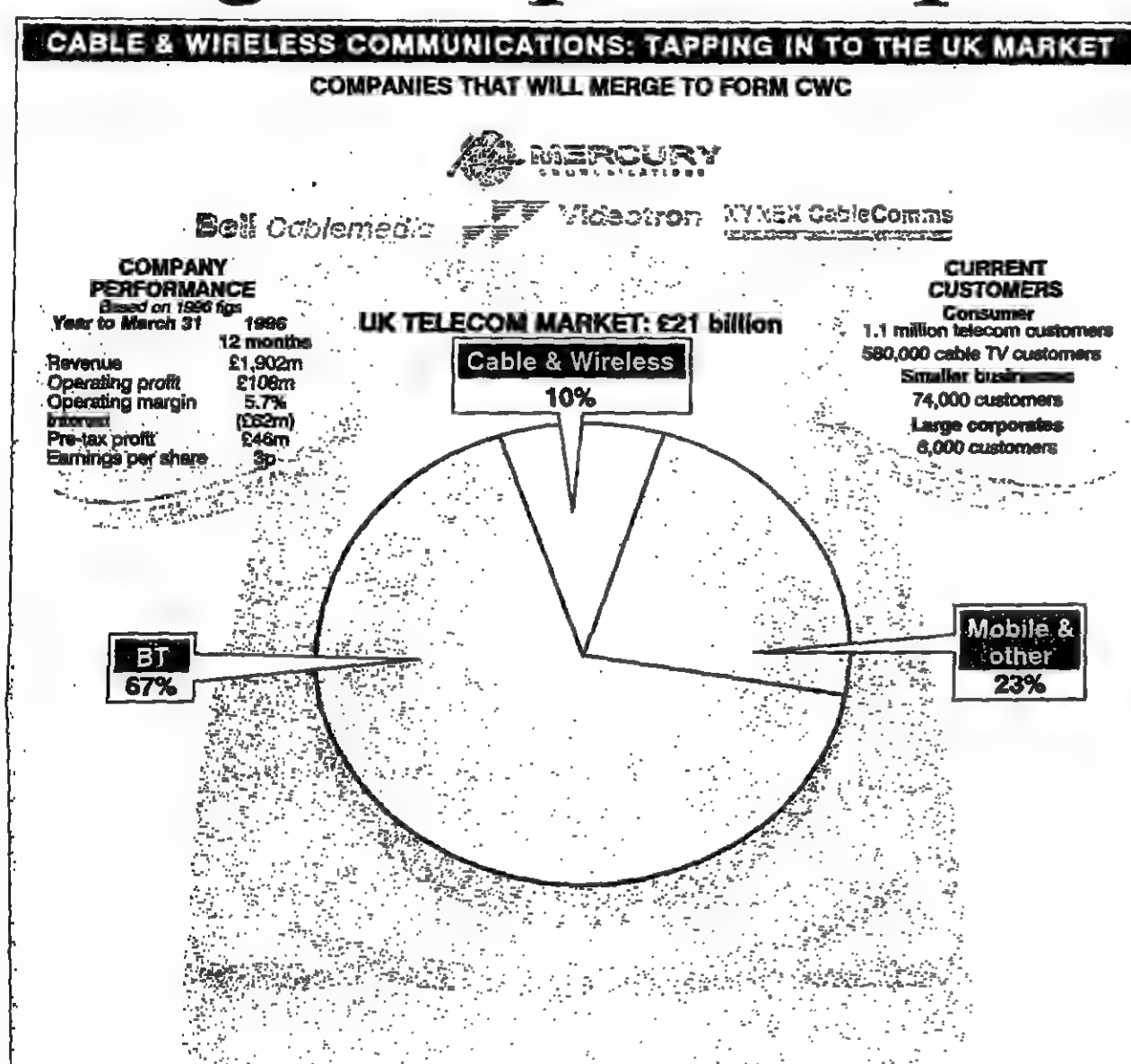
The £21 billion telecommunications market will be turned on its head next week. On Monday, or Tuesday, the shares of Cable and Wireless Communications (CWC) will start to trade on the London and New York stock exchanges. The company is expected to have a market capitalisation of £5 billion and will pose the biggest threat yet to the domination of the industry by British Telecom.

CWC brings together Mercury Communications, which is 80 per cent owned by Cable and Wireless, and three big cable companies — Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron. The new operation, which will be 53 per cent owned by C&W, will start with 1.2 million telephony customers, 600,000 cable-TV customers and pre-forma revenues of almost £2 billion. CWC plans to spend £2.3 billion on development over the next two years.

The potential to grow is enormous. The three cable companies in CWC are only half way through a multi-billion pound expansion programme that will see its high-capacity, multimedia networks pass six million homes. CWC also wants to expand through acquisitions. It does not even rule out buying TeleWest, the largest cable company in the UK, at least until the flotation of CWC, or adding One-2-One, the mobile phone company that is half owned by C&W, to the mix.

But CWC's success is far from assured. Sceptics have dismissed CWC as "a marriage of weakness" and think the increasingly savvy and nimble BT might have the last laugh. Indeed, cable companies have been the dogs of the stock market for the simple reason that consumers have shunned their services in droves.

The industry has suffered from a reputation for shoddy service, impotent marketing, high prices and mediocre programming: only about one in five homes that has access to cable subscribes to the service. The irony was rich. Most of



the dozen or so cable companies were controlled by American or Canadian corporations that considered themselves masters in the servicing and marketing departments.

Unless its cable penetration ratio is doubled, CWC could become a textbook case on failed mergers. Dick Brown, the chief executive of C&W, admitted: "The hardest challenge we have is to make this company work."

When Brown, 49, arrived from America last July, C&W was a mess. Lord Young of Graffham and James Ross, the two top executives, had been ousted because they could not stand the sight of each other.

The group seemed obsessed with small deals like snapping up minority stakes in far-flung phone companies while ignoring the big picture. It was getting battered in the domestic market, struggling to build a presence in continental Europe and America, and was

not sure how to deal with China's impending takeover of Hong Kong, where it owns 59 per cent of Hongkong Telecom, the most valuable business in C&W's global empire. BT had hoped to make Hongkong Telecom its gateway to the Far East and tried to negotiate a merger with C&W. What would have been the telecoms deal of the decade unravelled two months before Brown's arrival.

Brown, the former chief executive of H&R Block, the world's largest tax preparation company, spent much of his career at Ameritech, of Chicago, one of America's largest regional phone companies. His appointment at C&W was a surprise. A man with virtually no international experience was to run the world's only truly global phone company. C&W, once called Imperial and International Communications, was the ears of the British empire and had built operations in about 50 countries. His learning

curve was near vertical. Brown had been winking at 4am and was at work before 7am. His office, Lord Young's former digs, is covered with maps so he could make sense of the international network. He has even learned the rules of cricket, a favourite sport in many of the countries in which C&W operates, although he is still grasping with the concept of a "googly".

Tinkering, instead of bold moves, occupied his early months. He yanked C&W out of its potentially costly telecoms alliance with Veba in Germany, reduced or eliminated a handful of overseas investments and ramped up the marketing effort at One-2-One, which had fallen well behind Orange, its younger rival.

CWC is Brown's biggest and riskiest move. If the grand scheme fails, Brown will undoubtedly be remembered as yet another loud-mouthed American who underestimated the British cable market.

CWC is a massively complicated beast. The US Securities and Exchange Commission file ran to 800 pages, the biggest in the agency's history.

Brown said: "We're taking four companies and smashing them together. We've created something that has never existed before — a cable company with an international phone network and a customer base for entertainment services."

The new company will be marginally profitable, but only because Mercury's income is enough to offset the substantial losses at Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron. C&W has a four-part plan to make CWC a success. It will make the improvement of customer service and marketing a priority. Brown will not reveal details, but said that CWC is to spend £50 million on an advertising campaign — one of the biggest in history — in the autumn.

Secondly, it will merge operations, such as billing, service

ing and network control centres, to save costs. Brown conceded that the figure for job losses would run into "four digits". Analysts think that as many as 2,000 jobs, equivalent to 15 per cent of CWC's workforce, could disappear.

Thirdly, CWC wants to fill the one glaring hole in its portfolio. It needs a mobile-phone company and One-2-One is the only logical choice because it is half owned by C&W. The problem is that US West Media Group owns the other half of One-2-One and has shown no interest in selling, partly because it is an investor in the TeleWest cable company, one of CWC's main competitors.

Brown thinks US West may have a change of heart. Earlier this week, Airtouch, an American wireless phone company, agreed to buy US West's domestic wireless business for \$2.3 billion. The move, CWC hopes, will trigger the sale of US West's wireless operations overseas, including its stake in One-2-One. US West, however, said that it had no immediate plans to do so.

Finally, CWC will spend almost £300 million to make its cable systems ready for digital TV. Digital technology will give the viewer the choice of 200 or so film, entertainment, sport and specialty channels and will eventually make interactive services such as video-on-demand and home banking possible.

Yesterday Brown predicted that CWC's digital network would be ready before the one under development by BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster that is 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of *The Times*. CWC has placed an £180 million order for digital set-top boxes with General Instrument of America and is negotiating with Walt Disney, Time Warner and Viacom, among others, for film and pay-per-view rights.

BSkyB has said it hopes to launch its digital services by the autumn, but it has not yet pressed the start button. It is still in negotiations with BT, Midland Bank and Matsushita, the Japanese electronics maker, to form a company designed to subsidise the retail price of the set-top boxes.

There is speculation that BSkyB will have to delay its digital launch until early next year unless the negotiations come to fruition within the next month or so. Brown said: "We are aggressively going after digital. I think we will be digital at the same time or earlier than them."

CBI orchestrates a punctilious search for single currency accord

Industry leaders have been angered by reports that they are ready to back monetary union, says Philip Bassett

Mad. That was the response of a leading figure in the Institute of Directors, at its annual Royal Albert Hall conference yesterday, to reports that the Confederation of British Industry was "poised" to support Britain joining the European single currency.

Mad they were at the CBI's bleak Centre Point headquarters — but not in the sense that the IOD senior official implied. CBI leaders were angry because of what they claimed was the misrepresentation of a careful consultation with industry on probably the key question facing business. CBI members are genuinely undecided about the single currency, and the Confederation is trying to inch its way towards what it hopes will be a fully representative decision on the issue later this year.

The issue has provoked sharp differences between the IOD and the CBI. Lord Young of Graffham, the institute's president, said yesterday: "The IOD is against a single currency." The former Conservative Cabinet minister raked over old coals by attacking the CBI for criticising

Tory union reforms of the 1980s "in order to have an easy life". He said: "I hope they are not just supporting a single currency to get an easy life again."

After polling its member companies last year and receiving an unclear answer on economic and monetary union, the CBI is now consulting its 13 regional councils and other internal bodies on the basis of a document drawn up principally by Adair Turner, the CBI director-general, Kate Barker, his chief economist, and Peter Agar, his deputy.

The document sets out the advantages and disadvantages of a single currency, and then proposes three options. First, a move that would "rule out EMU for the foreseeable future". Secondly, joining EMU as soon as is practically possible — though not necessarily on its planned start date of January 1, 1999. And thirdly, maintaining the Government's single currency option but going through preparatory procedures like co-operating with the establishment of a European central bank before making an entry after observing EMU in operation.

Business leaders know that they need to reflect as accurately as they can what they believe industry and services want to do in relation to EMU — but outside observers suspect there may be an ideological overlay at the moment, with the CBI seen as largely pro-European and EMU, and the free-market IOD seen as against it, with their survey findings coloured accordingly.

Further internal consultations may produce a more coherent answer eventually. But it's not there yet. And if that's a less good story, it is at least an accurate one. Business would be mad indeed not to get the single currency issue as right as it can.

CBI officials insist that, taken together, these three options do not mean that Britain will join EMU, as reported in yesterday's *Financial Times*. At a bad-tempered press conference yesterday, Ms Barker was clear on the key point: "The phrase for the foreseeable future" should not imply joining at some point."

CBI leaders, who met yesterday to review their EMU stance in the light of the row, suspect darker forces are at work. They believe that Conservative Central Office had a copy of the CBI's document last Friday, before it was considered by the CBI president's committee — its operational governing body — on Monday, and that the party's spin doctors interpreted it for their own polling day purposes.

Aside from the election manoeuvring, the flurry of interest in industry's view of a single currency does raise significant issues for business. There are clear differences between the IOD's insistence that business is resolutely opposed to EMU, and the CBI's more cautious interpretation of business's complex reaction to the issue.

The CBI's view has been informed by extensive local-level meetings with business, carried out with the Bank of England and the British Chambers of Commerce. Companies have voiced their concerns about a single currency and have made clear their intention to get on with it if necessary, at times regardless of what political and

business leaders might recommend. Business leaders know that they need to reflect as accurately as they can what they believe industry and services want to do in relation to EMU — but outside observers suspect there may be an ideological overlay at the moment, with the CBI seen as largely pro-European and EMU, and the free-market IOD seen as against it, with their survey findings coloured accordingly.

Further internal consultations may produce a more coherent answer eventually. But it's not there yet. And if that's a less good story, it is at least an accurate one. Business would be mad indeed not to get the single currency issue as right as it can.



Turner: cautious line



Lord Young: anti-EMU

Philanthropist Weston

GARRY WESTON, the 69-year-old chairman of Associated British Foods, whose personal wealth is estimated at £2.5 billion, emerges as Britain's leading philanthropist. The net assets of the Garfield Weston Foundation stand at £1.7 billion in terms of the market value of ABF and Fortnum & Mason shares, according to the *Baring Asset Management Top 3000 Charities*. Weston's charity is exceeded in size only by the Wellcome Foundation, with assets of £8 billion, and the Church Commissioners, with £2.7 billion. Glaxo Wellcome tops the list of stock market donors, while the Imperial Cancer Research Fund is the number one charity.

Poker face

EVER wondered how Peter Burt, group chief executive at

the Bank of Scotland, has managed to keep the bank out of the expensive pitfalls into which his competitors seem regularly to fall? It's simple, he says. "Never ever play poker with someone who's richer than yourself. You'll never win."

Star turn

HELEN SHAPIRO will be the star turn at this year's Building Societies Association annual conference in Brighton. The Sixties songstress has been picked to entertain guests at the two-day seminar that begins on May 21, with past hits, including *Walking Back to Happiness*, as well as numbers from her



Shapiro: BSA entertainer

more recent jazz foray. If this is too much for delegates to handle, the BSA fun run, sponsored by Fenchurch Insurance Services, will take place the morning after.

CALUM MACLEOD, chairman of Britannia Building Society, waited until the end of yesterday's annual meeting to crack his first joke. In response to a loyal member who stood up to deliver a passionate speech on mutualism, Dr MacLeod thanked him for his comments, adding: "But may I point out that you're preaching to the converted... or should I say unconverted?"

Party salesmen

PEOPLE would be happier buying a life assurance policy from Tony Blair than John Major, according to a survey by Cornhill Life. The grinning Labour leader was 5 per

centage points ahead of Paddy Ashdown and John Major who captured 13 per cent of the votes each. Asked who they would most like to look after their personal finances, 6 per cent said Gordon Brown — twice as many as cited Kenneth Clarke. Currently on the lookout for new recruits, Ian Reed, Cornhill Life's general manager, said: "I'm afraid none of the party leaders would be able to convert enough leads into sales to justify the offer of a position."

Arbib double

IT HAS BEEN an emotional month for Martyn Arbib, chairman of Perpetual, who

asked his wife to marry him 28 years ago yesterday. After my story this week that his youngest daughter Melanie has become engaged to the son of a Major General, her elder sibling has followed suit. Annabel, 26, who is about to graduate as a physiotherapist, is to marry Patrick, a captain in the Black Watch until this year, and the youngest son of Colonel and Mrs Earle William Nicoll of Grez Dozeau, Belgium. Racing her sister up the aisle, Annabel has her sights set on a late summer wedding.

Bored with watching the *Alliance & Leicester* share price fluctuate? Then reach for a library book, particularly if you are living in North and South London or Devon, where the A&L has inserted 50,000 bookmarks worth £5 each at branches of Waterstone's, but only if you open an A&L Giro account.

MORAG PRESTON

THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Enterprise Inns buys Discovery for £46m

By CHRIS AYRES

CONSOLIDATION of the independent pubs sector gathered pace yesterday with the £46.2 million purchase of Discovery Inns by Enterprise Inns. Enterprise will own nearly 1,200 pubs after the Discovery deal and says it is negotiating to buy more.

Enterprise's ambitions were underlined by yesterday's three-for-eight rights issue, which will raise £33.2 million for the pub group and significantly reduce its gearing, giving it about £50 million to fund further acquisitions.

Ted Tuppen, chief executive of Enterprise, said: "We have the operating structure in place to manage 1,600 pubs. We want the whole estate to be managed by licensees, with each pub being a business in its own right. Each pub is like a non-branded franchise, and

it works best if the customer believes that the pub is the licensee's own business. But just like any good franchise, we want to help our licensees to sell more beer."

The company also announced a rise in pre-tax profits, from £3.5 million to £6.2 million, in the six months to March 29, on turnover that nearly doubled to £23.6 million from £12.4 million. Earnings rose from 7p a share to 10.7p, and the interim dividend is increased to 2.5p (2.25p).

The Enterprise acquisition comes after JD Wetherspoon's move this month to create 10,000 jobs through the creation of 350 pubs, and a recent string of acquisitions by Century Inns, which now owns more than 400 outlets.

It is now eight years since the Government introduced the beer orders, which forced brewers to sell large chunks of their estates.

The growth of the independent pub sector has largely been based on companies buying these pubs and leasing them, under the agreement that the licensees buy all their beer from the pub owner.

Mr Tuppen says: "We don't like to think of ourselves as just middle men. Running a pub on your own can be rather lonely and bloody hard work. We bring expertise and buying power."

Enterprise, created in 1991 by a syndicate of venture capitalists, started with 370 pubs, increasing these to 500 by the time it was floated in 1995. A year later, after buying the John Labatt pub group for £51 million, the group had more than 900 outlets.

Analysts are now cautious about how long the independent pub boom can continue. John Carnegie, from BZW, says: "At the moment, independent companies own about a quarter of pubs in Britain. Over the next four years, that could end up being about 50 per cent. But we think there will be a consolidation in the pubs market before long."



Ted Tuppen, left, celebrates Enterprise's acquisition of Discovery Inns with Hubert Reid, chairman, centre, and David George, finance director

Film and TV lift Disney

Walt Disney, the US entertainment conglomerate, reported a \$333 million profit for the first quarter of the year after a strong rise in revenues and operating income.

The big leap from the \$204 million last time reflected a full contribution from the recently acquired Capital Cities-ABC television network.

The TV company has added to Disney's earnings mix, but its audience ratings have slipped against NBC and CBS. Disney is now shaking up ABC's management.

Revenues rose 10 per cent to \$5.5 billion, while operating income soared by 34 per cent to \$864 million. The group's film operations performed well, with a substantial income contributed by *The English Patient*, starring Ruffalo Fieness, which was nominated for nine Oscar awards.

Michael Eisner, the chairman, said that the theme park business and its ESPN sports TV cable channel produced healthy profits, while worldwide merchandising also grew strongly. Over the past six months revenues for the whole group have risen 8 per cent to \$11.8 billion, while operating income grew 24 per cent to \$2.3 billion.

PGA scores higher

PGA, the property group turned golf course operator, lifted pre-tax profits last year to £2.7 million from £478,000, on a turnover of £4.8 million, up from £790,000. Earnings per share were 0.44p, up from 0.34p, and a total dividend of 0.5p (nil) will be paid on July 16 (no interim).

The company, which was called Union Square before it bought Algarve Golf Courses and PGA in May last year, yesterday announced the acquisition of a 50 per cent interest in Woburn Golf and Country Club for £5.7 million.

The group hopes to take advantage of the growing demand for golf television coverage. PGA says it has already sold £6.6 million worth of its commercial properties, with more disposals to follow.

City 'star system' defended

By ADAM JONES

A TOP corporate headhunter told a conference in London that securities houses are unlikely to stop singling out star performers for enormous salary and bonus packages, despite public concern.

Andrew Lowenthal, a partner at Egon Zehnder International, said a "world price" is now being paid for top performers, reflecting the ease with which they can move between major financial centres. A more difficult issue for employers was differentiating between "truly star performers and those who are more mortal".

However, he added, the perception that individuals can boost profits should ensure that the star system continues.

Record half-year for Anglo Irish

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN DUBLIN

ANGLO Irish Bank Corporation said a strong financial performance and market position would enable it to sustain growth in the current year.

The bank reported a 22 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to Ir£13.7 million in the six months to March 31 and a 23 per cent increase in earnings to Ir£2.3p a share.

The bank said the results were the best half-year figures in its history and were due to strong, sustained organic growth that demonstrated the fruits of strategic direction. The interim dividend is increased 10 per cent to Ir£0.65p a share.

Anglo Irish said the banking environment in key markets was favourable, with the Irish economy continuing to perform strongly and the British economy witnessing a recovery. Because of intense

competition in the financial services market, management of margins held the key to success, it said.

The bank plans to continue to concentrate on secured lending to the middle market and professional corporate sectors in the Republic of Ireland. In Britain, it intends to continue concentrating on the growth of business while protecting the quality of existing business.

Deposit growth during the six months was strong, it said, with an 11.7 per cent increase to Ir£2.33 billion, most of it from Ireland. The increase left the bank with healthy liquidity and the group's cost income ratio fell to 44 per cent, it said.

The bank, which is frequently cited as a possible takeover target, said it "valued its independence."

Most UK firms stay British

THE vast majority of the UK's largest companies have remained under British ownership since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, according to a new survey.

Out of the top 500 UK companies in 1979, only 70 of those are no longer British owned and nine of the 1979 top 25 were still there in 1996, said CCN, the information services specialist.

The US is the largest foreign owner, with 16 of the companies that were in the top 500 in 1979. The biggest company to have been adopted by a foreign parent is British Leyland, as it was known in 1979. The state-owned carmaker, renamed Rover in the 1980s, was bought two years ago for £800 million by BMW of Germany.

Housing hit by 'vicious circle'

By SARA MCCONNELL

A "VICIOUS CIRCLE" is operating in parts of the housing market, with potential buyers holding back from putting their home up for sale before they have found a place to buy, thus further exacerbating the shortage of properties.

In its latest quarterly regional house price survey the Nationwide Building Society said this circle "needs to be broken if current supply shortages are to be resolved". It adds: "In the end this is only likely to be achieved through price increases."

Existing homeowners are the key to breaking the deadlock, said the society, but prices will have to rise further before potential sellers are convinced that they will get an acceptable price for their own property.

The North-South divide widened in the first quarter of the year, with London recording

prices of almost 5 per cent while Scotland and northern England remained almost static. Nationally prices rose 1.3 per cent. 5.6 percentage points up on the previous year and the fastest rate of growth since 1989.

London saw price rises of 21 per cent over the past year, while the outer metropolitan area just outside Greater London saw rises of 12 per cent. Rises of 15 per cent in East Anglia have eradicated much of that region's negative equity.

In contrast prices in Scotland have fallen over the past 12 months.

The sharp rises in London and the South East reflect the shortage of supply, which is most pronounced in these areas. In central London prices are now above their 1989 peak, says Nationwide.

Can investors close the gap?

Matthew Gaved on the role of institutional shareholders in corporate governance

THE current orthodoxy is that institutional shareholders can play a much more active role in the governance of listed companies than is now the case. This is challenged in a report, *Closing the Communications Gap: Disclosure and Institutional Shareholders*, published today by the ICAEW.

Domestic and overseas institutional investors now account for more than three quarters of the value of shares on the stock market. The ten largest investors alone make up a quarter of total market capitalisation. Many companies now have one or more shareholders with stakes in excess of 5 per cent, and about a third of the largest companies have at least one institutional investor with a stake in excess of 10 per cent.

The popular expectation is, therefore, that these investors would wish to, and should, play a key role in the governance processes of the companies in which they invest.

Institutional investors generally supported the initiatives over the past few years to try to improve standards of corporate governance. The pace-setters are also beginning to take the initiative themselves. Last month Hermes recommended that non-executive directors

should be paid partly in shares. CalPERS, a big US fund manager, launched global guidelines that would abolish show-of-hands voting and combined chairman/CEOs.

Institutional shareholders, however, operate under practical, legal and organisational constraints that help to explain their relative lack of involvement.

Most institutional investors have the bulk of their holdings, by value, in the top hundred companies, which make up three quarters of stock market capitalisation. For many smaller fund managers with relatively small holdings, the time cost of actively monitoring the impact of the quality of companies' boards and their standards of corporate governance may be hard to justify.

Active involvement by fund managers tends to focus on companies in which the institution concerned is the largest shareholder and is biased towards underperforming companies even though many others in the portfolio may be performing satisfactorily but well below their potential. There is also a reluctance on the part of many institutions to receive confidential information that would make them insiders.



Matthew Gaved offers a challenge to current orthodoxy

How can institutional shareholders be persuaded to pay greater attention to governance issues?

The answer lies in placing more relevant and reliable information in the public domain in easily available form. This would also help smaller fund managers and private investors who are often ignored. Annual meetings might

become more worthwhile events with a greater focus on a company's intentions and prospects.

Greater disclosure in areas such as corporate strategy, market share and position, performance against objectives and risks faced is essential. Even the best companies have scope to improve. Indeed, the time may have come to

review the ASB's Statement on the Operating and Financial Review. More transparency is required, particularly on board remuneration: the financial implications of directors' pension rights and incentive arrangements are still often obscured. Shareholders would surely welcome a report on key issues discussed by the board itself, subject to commercial secrecy.

As speakers made clear at this year's Stock Exchange and Chartered Accountants' Awards for Published Accounts, the role and substance of the report as the primary means of shareholder communication is overdue for review. The largely historical perspective and often poor presentation do little to enhance investor confidence, especially as most market attention focuses on the preliminary announcement.

The Internet offers opportunities to enhance access for all shareholders and to provide more up-to-date information in a cost-effective way. Information might be produced more frequently than at present.

By redefining their investor communications strategies, boards can enhance their accountability to all shareholders and create a more robust framework to promote corporate performance, long-term enterprise and shareholder value.

Matthew Gaved is editor of *Governance*, the corporate governance newsletter.

Black-Scholes and astronomical losses

ASTRONOMERS talk of black holes where all the normal physical rules, such as gravity, are turned upside down. In the equally made world of financial instruments and derivatives people talk of Black-Scholes. These were the two US academics who devised a system in the early 1970s that enabled companies to value options. From that has grown a whole industry starting with the first swap in 1981 between the World Bank and IBM.

Since then the business of financial instruments has revolutionised the corporate world. But even now it also divides that world. Some argue that derivatives are the business equivalent of the doomsday machine and that world markets will face some sort of meltdown as chain reactions of misfiring financial instruments trigger unforeseen global disasters. Others take the relaxed view that, properly understood and carefully handled, financial instruments are simply a way of trying to minimise risk.

The problem is that some of the financial complexity involved is viewed as being akin to rocket science. And all the public ever sees is the occasional announcement of what appear to be astronomical losses at a bank because no one either understood or was supervising what some lad in treasury was up to.

It is into this arena that the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) is lobbying its draft rules on how companies should disclose their use of derivatives and other financial instruments. As you might imagine it is a fairly fraught exercise. But there should be no panic. Any company should, theoretically, already be following simple rules.

Large companies will be aware of the rules that the International Accounting Standards Committee put into place last year. The new ASB draft is simply putting a series of disclosure proposals out for further discussion. If the ASB can get finalised rules published by November this year then these would probably be in force for year ends on or after the end of April next year. For most companies of any size none of this should cause too much of a problem. But history shows that calling for any new disclosures, particularly in an area which is complex and controversial, means opposition from the preparers of accounts.

The first thing that will antagonise them is that the ASB is asking for disclosures to be mandatory. When the ASB sifted the responses

it received on its discussion paper it found that the majority were in favour of non-mandatory disclosures. Partly this was because the disclosure was intended to appear in the operating and financial review, which itself is non-mandatory and discursive. But the ASB feels that, despite not commanding a majority, the arguments that something as important as disclosure of financial instruments has to be mandatory should carry the day. The disclosure can still be discursive and appear in the operating and financial review but will have to be cross-referenced to the notes to the accounts and so be mandatory.

The aim is very simple. As the ASB puts it: "An entity should provide a discussion of the major financial risks that it faces in its activities and the use it makes of financial instruments in managing each of these risks." And although much of the essence of these rules has effectively been in the public domain for some years it does not mean that they have been followed.

Company Reporting, the Edinburgh-based monitor of reporting practices, carried out a survey last November and found that few companies were disclosing information that would enable analysts to form a view. But they also showed, through the disclosure practices of a handful of mostly blue-chip companies, that by and large the sorts of disclosures that the ASB was suggesting were perfectly possible.

"In highlighting the disclosure practices of some notable companies," their report concluded, "we show that no major practical difficulties stand in the way of providing information that would enable analysts to better form an opinion as to the risk profile of a company's treasury function."

Or as Allan Cook, the ASB's technical director, put it this week: "Derivatives are quite normal but they have the ability to transform accounts." On that basis it is quite reasonable for companies to provide the information so that the risk profile behind the company can be gauged and compared with that of other companies.

And the simple act of disclosure will continue the process of demystifying the whole derivatives industry. If financial instruments are better understood, particularly by boards of directors, then the dangers of corporate meltdown will recede still further.



ROBERT BRUCE

Unconvinced by the full Monti

IT WAS perhaps unfortunate timing. The English ICA, long before announcements about general elections, had invited Mario Monti, European Commissioner responsible for the single market, to speak at its annual dinner this week.

As a result, a lengthy but thoughtful speech made little headway among a gathering of predominantly Euro-sceptic

accountants. Signor Monti himself did little to cheer his audience. "Coming finally to the questions which are more direct interest to the Institute members..." he said. And then, some five pages later, he told them that this had been "rather a rapid tour d'horizon of our work in the accounting and audit field". Restless members remained unconvinced.

Tax post-haste

ONE should never underestimate the nation's belief in order and tidiness, particularly in its financial affairs. The Inland Revenue spent the first week of its efforts at getting the introduction of self-assessment off the ground worrying whether it had managed to post the eight million tax

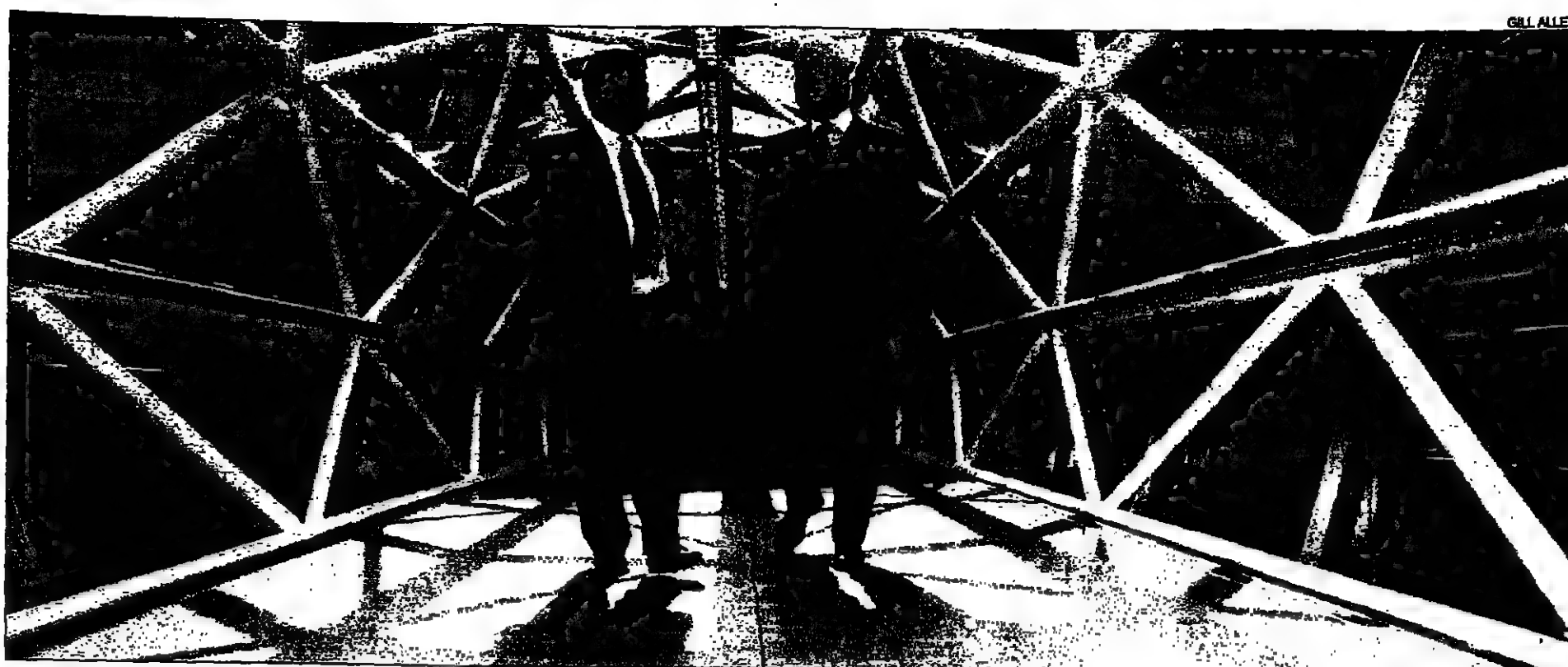
forms to the right people. So it came as a bit of a surprise to find that by the first Saturday some 20 taxpayers had already completed the forms and sent them back.

Sludge success

THE most unlikely things can bring you praise. At the presentation of this year's Environmental Reporting Awards

it fell to Roger Adams, head of technical services at the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, which sponsors the awards, to give the judges' views on the winners. He praised Anglian Water for introducing industry norm figures as a benchmark by which the company's own performance may be judged. And what example of benchmarking did he use? "Sewage sludge use". Where there is much there is brass, as the water companies say.

Bentalls and James Beattie advances surprise City



Grenville Peacock, left, chief executive of Bentalls, and John Ryan, finance director, announced a tripling of pre-tax profits and said current sales were 11 per cent up on last year

Retailers report strong recovery

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

BENTALLS and James Beattie, two regional department store groups, yesterday surprised the City with stronger than expected sets of results.

Both reported signs of growing consumer confidence, saying that the approach of the general election had not slowed spending.

Traditional department stores were among the worst hit by the recession earlier this decade. In recent months, led by John Lewis, they have



begun to show the benefits of the housing market recovery, with spending on household goods rising and spending on clothing and footwear also increasing.

James Beattie, based in Wolverhampton, reported a 30.2 per cent jump in pre-tax

profits to £7.6 million in the year to January 31.

Sales at the group, which invested £2.5 million in upgrading its chain of nine stores last year, reached a record £98.8 million, up 9.5 per cent on the previous year. Its operating margins rose from 5.7 per cent to 7.3 per cent.

Earnings per share were 12.4p (9.1p) and the company will pay a final dividend of 6p (5.05p) on July 7, making a total of 7.75p (6.65p).

Sir Eric Pountain, chairman, said the outlook for high street

spending is healthy this year, whoever wins the election next week. Spending will be fuelled by windfall payments as building societies and insurers demutualised, he said. "I believe the economy, and in particular retail spending, is on course."

Bentalls, with its flagship outlet at Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, said current sales are 11 per cent ahead of the same period last year. The company plans to open a new store in Bristol, bought from the John Lewis Partnership which has moved to an edge of



town site, in the second half of next year.

Pre-tax profits rose to £3.7 million from £1.2 million for the 53 weeks to February 1 on sales that improved to £97.3 million (£86 million). Earnings were 7.49p from 1.74p. The total dividend rises 25.2

per cent to 2.78p a share, with a 2.18p final. The company put the cost of refurbishing the Bristol store at £26 million, including the purchase of the 125-year peppercorn lease.

Beatties ended the year with net cash of £1.4 million, compared with borrowings of £17.2 million a year ago, after disposing of some rental interest in the Beatties Centre in Kingston to Norwich Union for £9.85 million.

Beatties shares closed 7p higher at 153.1p while Bentalls was 11p higher at 138.1p.

Umeco appoints joint leadership

By FRASER NELSON

BRIAN MCGOWAN, the entrepreneur who now chairs struggling House of Fraser, is to take the reins of Umeco, the aerospace components company, along with Clive Snowdon.

Mr McGowan and Mr Snowdon, who left Burnfield as chairman and managing director respectively when the electrical equipment group was taken over by Fairley, take office on Monday. The news was well received in the City where Umeco's shares, which have trebled in value over the past 12 months, rose 38.5p to a near-high of 297p.

Before moving to HoF Mr McGowan played a crucial role in building up Williams Holdings.

The rise was lifted by news that Umeco has bought GRP, a plastics manufacturer, from private hands for £9.2 million — a valuation of nine times earnings. The deal will be funded through a £10 million placing and open offer with 4.09 million shares at 245p.

George Metcalfe, the outgoing chairman, forecast that the acquisition will enhance earnings by 20 per cent in its first year alone.

The company also forecast that its next set of results will show a pre-tax profit of £2.5 million (£1.85 million) for the year to March 31 — in line with expectations. It has proposed a final dividend of 3.7p, which would lift the total to 5.5p (4.26p).



McGowan: welcome choice

Hozelock acts to halt ban fears

HOZELOCK, whose investors have taken fright over the prospect of yet another prolonged hosepipe ban in many parts of the country, acted yesterday to stem the decline in its share price to 379p from 551p a year ago (Martin Barrow writes).

The company, a leading supplier of gardening products and accessories, said first-half profits would come in at around £3 million, little changed from the same period the previous year but it expected a greater proportion of earnings to come in the second half.

The company's shares recovered 45p, to 425p, yesterday. David Codling, chief executive, said an early start to spring had created ideal selling conditions and a significantly smaller proportion of the UK population was affected by water restrictions than at this stage of 1996. He added: "We are having an excellent April, with strong demand for our products across Europe."

Warning hits shares of Eurodis Electron

By ADAM JONES

SHARES of Eurodis Electron, the electronic components distributor, plummeted 36p to 133.5p yesterday when it issued a profits warning only three months after forecasting a strong recovery in sales.

The company, which was formed from the 1995 merger of Britain's Electron House and Switzerland's Eurodis, said that results for the year to May 31 would fall well short of current forecasts.

The shares have languished since reaching 312p in January 1996. However, after the confident statement at the start of the year, the price rallied past 220p.

One analyst said that expectations of full-year, pre-tax profit had now slipped from £8 million to £5 million. He said that the optimism over improved orders at the start of the year petered out when an expected seasonal upturn failed to occur.

The stagnation of the electronics market in Europe has put pressure on distributors, which are saddled with high operational gearing. Eurodis Electron also said that it was being hurt by the strong pound.

Robert Leigh, chairman, said that 1997-98 performance should be much improved.

Eurodis Electron made £3.06 million pre-tax profit in the six months to November 30, a 34 per cent fall on the same period in 1996, excluding exceptional profit on a disposal. However, it raised its interim dividend 5 per cent to 1.95p.

Quaker Oats suffers \$1.1bn loss

FROM RICHARD THOMSON IN NEW YORK

QUAKER OATS, the food group, reported an unprecedented \$1.1 billion loss for the first three months of this year after the sale last month of Snapple, the soft drinks company. Quaker has launched a search for a new chairman to replace William Smithburg who oversaw the disastrous purchase of Snapple less than three years ago.

Quaker was forced to write off \$1.14 billion on the sale as the price of getting rid of the soft drinks operation. The Snapple purchase ranks as one of the biggest corporate blunders of recent years, after the company bought it for \$1.7 billion in 1994. It sold the company to Triarc, which

owns other soft drink brands, for only \$300 million.

Quaker was widely thought to have paid too much for Snapple and it then failed to integrate the company effectively into its existing soft drinks operations, achieving no economies of scale. A fall in Snapple's sales led to a steep fall in its profitability, and the company never made any money for Quaker. After expensive efforts to boost sales through marketing campaigns, Quaker gave up on Snapple and sold it for the huge loss.

The planned departure of Mr Smithburg as soon as a new chairman

has been recruited is the first admission by Quaker's senior management that it has made a serious mistake over Snapple. Mr Smithburg has been chairman and chief executive for the past 16 years.

The first-quarter loss compares with a profit at the same time last year of \$32.2 million. The group said that without the special charge its earnings improved slightly despite a fall in sales from \$1.22 billion to \$1.2 billion.

Quaker said it may sell a number of non-core businesses as part of a strategy to focus on fewer operations, although it did not specify what these were.

Huntleigh payout and trade higher

By MARTIN BARROW

HUNTLEIGH Technology, the medical products group whose shares have fallen sharply in the past year, sought to reassure investors yesterday by increasing the total dividend 10 per cent and issuing a confident statement on current trading.

The company, based in Luton, Bedfordshire, said profits before tax and exceptional items eased slightly to £12.6 million in 1996 from £12.8 million in the previous year. There was an exceptional charge of £750,000 against the restructuring of Hoskins, a manufacturer of hospital beds that was acquired from the receivers in September 1996.

Sales were little changed at £92.9 million, against £91.9

million, with difficult trading conditions in its principal markets in Britain and America offset by an increase in business with other export markets.

Rolf Schild, chairman, said the increase in trading activities seen at the end of 1996 continued during the first quarter of the current year, despite continued restrictions on healthcare budgets in Britain and some of Huntleigh's larger export markets.

The total dividend is increased to 2.93p a share from 2.67p previously, adjusted for the capitalisation issue in October, with a 1.0p final.

The shares, which a year ago were trading at 316p, rose 2.5p to 190p yesterday.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Mine liquidation hits Waverley shares

SHARES in Waverley Mining dived 15p to 39.1p after a £23 million coal mine that has been bedevilled with flooding problems went into liquidation with the loss of 300 jobs. Monktonhall Colliery, near Edinburgh, which is operated by Waverley, has been working on a care and maintenance basis since the flooding was discovered last month.

The company has petitioned the Court of Session in Edinburgh for the appointment of a provisional liquidator. The National Union of Mineworkers believes the pit could open in weeks, however. A union spokesman said: "The water problem has been contained and as far as we are concerned we should be returning to production." The company said holes had been bored to assess the extent of the water damage, and it had taken technical advice, but it concluded that the cost of removing the water meant reopening the mine was no longer financially viable.

Lonrho stake to be sold

THE European Commission said Anglo American Corp had agreed to an EC demand to cut its stake in Lonrho to 9.99 per cent from 27.5 per cent. The Commission feared the South African group's stake in Lonrho, which has a substantial interest in two South African platinum mines, would put control of the world's platinum industry in the hands of Anglo and Gencor, the South African mining house. The Commission believes its ruling will allow the three South African platinum producers, Anglo, Lonrho and Gencor, to continue to exist separately.

Scruttons departure

SHARES of Scruttons fell 70p to 260p after the freight ferry and port services company announced the immediate departure of Angus Fraser as chief executive and said that first-half profits would fall short of expectations. Max Gladwyn becomes executive chairman. Profits would recover in the second half, the company said, and the interim dividend would again be held at 6p a share.

Hughes doubles profit

TJ HUGHES, the department store operator, doubled pre-tax profits in the year ended January 25 to £1.8 million, on a turnover of £63 million, up 24 per cent from £50.9 million. Earnings per share jumped from 3.2p to 6.14p, and a final dividend of 2.08p will be paid on August 4, making the total 2.92p (2.65p). George Foster, a director of Alders, a rival store operator, has been appointed managing director.

Smith & Nephew invests

SMITH & NEPHEW, the healthcare group, plans to lift 1997 R&D spending by £2 million to £35 million. Eric Kinder, the chairman, also told the annual meeting that forecasting this year's trading outcome was "particularly difficult" because of the strength of sterling. The Dermagraft artificial skin product, which Mr Kinder said has a market value of about £1.5 billion, is due to be launched later this year in 13 countries.

Sykes forecasts growth

ANDREW SYKES Group, the restructured industrial services company, said it is poised for growth, both organically and by acquisition. The company reported pre-tax profits of £7.9 million for the year to December 28, compared with £4.7 million for the final nine months of 1996. Earnings of 33.8p a share compared with 19.2p previously. A final dividend of 6.5p a share lifts the total to 10p from 3p.

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DISTRIBUTION

■ FILM 1

It's déjà vu week in the cinema, with reissues of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*...

■ FILM 2

...and the third and last instalment of the *Star Wars* trilogy. *Return of the Jedi*...

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ FILM 3

...but Whoopi Goldberg fans can admire their heroine as a basketball coach in *Eddie*...

■ FILM 4

...and a lot of famous British faces romp their way through *Cold Comfort Farm*

No challenger to Hitchcock's dizzy heights

CINEMA: In a week of re-releases – and Goldberg at her most Whoopi – Geoff Brown finds solace in *Vertigo*

So which is it to be? Up the steps of the mission house tower with James Stewart in *Vertigo*, or down to the basement with Dorothy McGuire in *The Spiral Staircase*? Both are "old" films, both moody thrillers: yet both, *Vertigo* in particular, have more life in them than anything new that cinemas are offering this week.

Hitchcock's film was first released in 1958. In some surface ways its age shows, even in this restored print with a cleaned-up image and a soundtrack fit for the digital era. For cinema is a time machine, and *Vertigo* whisks us back to the point when James Stewart was far from being the gangling youth of Frank Capra fantasies, but not yet the craggy veteran of *Cheyenne Autumn* or *Shenandoah*. Hair tinged with grey, he looks solid, mature, good in a suit.

The film's technology is also of an age. Today the San Francisco cityscapes would be real, or simulated by computer. Hitchcock's camera gets out and about for atmosphere, but when dialogue and action are required he retreats to a studio mock-up. In the foreground, you see Stewart, Kim Novak or Barbara Bel Geddes acting away on a stretch of a roof, the front seats of a car, a hotel room or an office. In the background, you get the art department's toytown vista, or a snatch of back-projected footage. It smacks of artifice, and 1950s Hollywood.

But in other respects *Vertigo*, perhaps more than any other Hitchcock film, cuts across time and fashion. Compared to today's commercial thrillers, *Vertigo* is sculpted like a high art movie by Tarkovsky, each image polished and carefully placed. Music is not rammed down our ears, but woven into the drama. It is gorgeous music too, by Bernard Herrmann, darkly romantic, yearning, obsessive: qualities shared with

the story spun about a retired detective, afraid of heights, who falls in love with the mysterious woman he is hired to follow in and around San Francisco.

There is more to the plot than that, although any newcomers to *Vertigo* will not thank me for revealing the twists dreamt up by Pierre Boileau and Thomas

most modern, if not post-modern, movie.

Placed alongside it, *The Spiral Staircase*, made in 1945 and re-released as part of the National Film Theatre's crime season, *Murder Ink*, looks positively Victorian. All the old trappings of melodrama – the howling wind and lashing rain, the flickering gaslights and fearful shadows – are wheeled on to decorate the tale of a mute servant girl (Dorothy McGuire) terrified by a lurking killer. It is antiquated, but enjoyable stuff.

The time is the early years of the century, the place New England, seen through the Germanic eyes of the emigre director Robert Siodmak. Someone in the locality is striking down people with disabilities; McGuire appears to be the next in line. "Leave this house tonight, if you know what's good for you," croaks Ethel Barrymore's bedridden grande dame. Too late, the die is cast; but how can the poor girl cry for help?

Imagine how a modern remake would gloat over the killer's perversions, and delight in the damsel's distress. Siodmak takes a different approach. "We tried to create a kind of surrealist film that would put the audience in a state of hypnosis, and accept the developments without asking questions," he recalled much later. (Hitchcock had a similar aim in *Vertigo*.)

The audience's trance is not total: wooden acting from the likes of Kent Smith puncture the spell, and the ponderously ornate interiors scarcely charm the eye like the sleek designs of *Vertigo*. But there is still enough gentility to frighten and beguile us.

The third, and least interesting, veteran film of the week is *Return of the Jedi*, directed by Richard Marquand in 1983, the last instalment to date in George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga. Enhancements for this special edition include an enlarged musical number in

Vertigo
Lumiere, PG, 128 mins
Restored print of Hitchcock's spellbinder

The Spiral Staircase
National Film Theatre
PG, 83 mins
Vintage thriller, served with style

Return of the Jedi
Odeon Leicester Square
U, 133 mins
Luke Skywalker meets too many furry creatures

Eddie
Warner West End
12, 101 mins
Whoopi Goldberg as a basketball coach

Cold Comfort Farm
Virgin Haymarket
PG, 98 mins
TV adaptation ungainly on the big screen

Narcotica, the French writers of *Les Diaboliques*. But I can reveal what the film looks and feels like: a melancholy procession of dreamlike images, sometimes misty, sometimes crisp: a trip into Hitchcock's innermost fears: a film about illusion and delusion, stamped with Stewart's perplexed eyes and the trance-like stare of Novak, ice-cold but teasing, haunted and haunting in grey suit and platinum hair, indifferently received on its first release, *Vertigo* is Hitchcock's



"Compared to today's commercial thrillers, *Vertigo* is sculpted like a high art movie". James Stewart and Kim Novak in Hitchcock's masterpiece

Jabba the Hutt's palace, extra tentacles on a snapping monster, and greater rejoicing when Darth Vader's Empire forces are overthrown. None of these makes a major difference to a film that wastes far too much time twiddling its thumbs with bizarre or cute creatures. Eventually the plot's basic conflict – between Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker, the errant father and the noble son, ensure powerful emotions and stirring action. But it still feels like the sweet relief to leave the cinema and rediscover a world outside populated by ordinary people, not gibbering creatures encased in plastic or fur.

The one genuinely new film this week is *Eddie*. You can imagine it with eyes closed. Whoopi Goldberg as a loud-mouthed basketball fan, cheering and abusing a team from the rear of the stadium? Say no more. Should I mention that the team's new money-grabbing owner fires

the coach and, as a stunt, invites Goldberg to take over? This, too, you knew already. Six writers, incidentally, taxed their brains over the script.

Cold Comfort Farm is new to British cinema screens, but not to Britain: John Schlesinger shot this television adaptation of Stella Gibbons's spoof rural melodrama in 1944, and its small-screen debut was on New Year's Day, 1995. For the cinema, the soundtrack has just been remixed in stereo, while the print has been blown up to 35mm. You still get a television-sized production, though, modest in scale and style.

Gibbons was parodying rural novelists such as Mary Webb when she wrote in the early 1930s about the Starkadder family, mired in gloom and doom in their decaying homestead. An imaginative film of *Cold Com-*

fort Farm might aim to find some mocking visual equivalent for Webb's fanciful descriptive prose – something done with a straight face nearly 50 years ago in Powell and Pressburger's luscious *Gone to Earth*.

But Schlesinger has simpler ambitions. Armed with Malcolm Bradbury's compact screenplay, he breezes through incidents and lets the actors carry the load. There is Kate Beckinsale, with a brisk, non-sensuous charm as Flora Poste, the orphaned young woman who tries to bring her eccentric relatives to heel. There is Eileen Atkins as the grief-stricken Judith; Rufus Sewell, pushing too hard as the smouldering Seth; Joanna Lumley as Flora's mentor, Mrs Smiling; and Freddie Jones, cleaning dishes with a twig. They, and Schlesinger, are in "romp" mode, and on the cinema screen it looks lame, or ugly, or both. Read the book instead.

'Whoopi wasted'

Every week, young film fans discuss some of the latest releases...

□ **EDDIE** Damian Samuels, 19: Whoopi Goldberg slam-dunks into action in this rather appalling comedy.

Tim Thornton, 21: A motion picture of unprecedented quality! Lesley Isaiah Thomas, 18: It did not score with me. Whoopi is wasted.

Peder Jensen, 16: This unfathomably awful piece of garbage did not contain even one successful joke.

□ **RETURN OF THE JEDI** Damian: Carrie Fisher's costume, the Ewoks and all the loose ends come together.

SNAP VERDICT

Tim: Surprisingly, this hasn't aged as well as the other two. Lesley: A Muppet-fest, and none the worse for that. Peder: The weakest of the *Star Wars* trilogy, but far superior to the average movie.

□ **COLD COMFORT FARM** Damian: It's a shame this great cast ended up with a pigsty of a script. Tim: Weak and disappointing. Lesley: Why has Ian McKellen been cast as a farmer? His performance doesn't work, and neither does this TV movie. Peder: It should never have been given a cinema release.

Frocks and high society on the rocks

DUNCAN C. WELDON is offering a really safe season in Chichester's main house this year. Lady Windermere loses her fan again; Madame Arcati calls up the wrong spirits; Maugham's *Our Betters* is a rare revival but the playwright is an old trusty. Sandy Wilson's *Divorce Me, Darling* takes his *Boy Friend* characters tunefully into the Thirties, and Ian Richardson will be a popular choice in *The Magistrate*. "The heart does not exactly sink at the prospect of these excitements but it beats slower."

Weldon has a business to run; an unsubsidised theatre must pay its way in the world. Thirty-five years have established an audience that likes what it knows. It is easy for critics to carp, but Safety First is a principle that glazes Chichester like aspic over pretty edibles.

For surprises we may have to go to Chichester's Minerva

Studio, which does offer some prickly plays over the next six months. In the meantime we have Barrie's clever social comedy in the main Festival Theatre, where the Edwardian hierarchy of peers and menials is sharply turned upside-down when Lord Loam and his household are wrecked on a desert island.

Though what happens seems pretty inevitable to an audience at this end of the century, it caused surprise and offence in 1902. Could Barrie mean that an earl was not ordained by God and the British Constitution to be inevitably a leader? Might a lady seriously consider marriage to a man who had been her father's butler?

The implications of this are told simply, but Barrie's ingenious little shoves at the boundary give the play a more than historical interest. His characters never quite escape from theatrical tradi-

THEATRE

The Admirable Crichton

Chichester

tion, even if their behaviour breaks conventions, and Michael Rudman's direction acknowledges this with occasional slow-motion inserts, to show time passing and to

indicate that we are watching what Barrie subtitled "A Fantasy". Accordingly, designer Johan Engels has turned to Henri Rousseau's jungle paintings for inspiration. The walls of Lord Loam's Mayfair house open out like the pages of a brilliantly coloured book to festoon the stage with tropical flora, and close two acts later, turning what happened beneath its lush foliage into a lost dream.

Michael Denison (22 this year) is enviably spry enough to dance to a concertina. Ian McShane, unexpected casting for Crichton, turns in an accomplished performance when playing the perfect butler but is a tad too measured as the perfect jungle king, blessing with his attentions Victoria Scarborough's Lady Mary. The play may only sinker with its explosive social content, but the dresses are lovely.

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least for the opening 45 minutes, it somehow is. Actually, that is the problem. *Eight Rooms*, as the first half is called, is more imaginative in its form than its content. Churchill has expanded the Ayckhournian device – pioneered in *How the Other Half Loves*, if memory serves – of giving us simultaneous stories in an identical space. Six couples, a woman birdwatcher, a businessman who keeps conscientiously phoning home, and an actress who doubles as a TV and a ghost, all share what seems to be the same room but is actually several different ones. Cool, casual jazz, rising to a crescendo when sex is on the agenda, accompanies them as they move and they sing.

But their movement and song, if not exactly banal, don't take us far into the quirks and oddities of their lives. A lesbian couple launch tentatively into an affair. A faithless wife suddenly worries about her children. A

drunk couple quarrel loudly, disturbing the others. Two Americans, there for the golf, exchange uh-huhs. Birds and death much preoccupy a middle-aged French couple. Yet even the ghost has nothing more to say than that she's forgotten why she is still hanging about.

In other words, the piece tantalises us voyeurs but, like hotels themselves, leaves us frustrated. The second half, *Two Nights*, is more elusive, poetic, striking and substantial. Who knows why Colin Poole collapses by the loo, or why Gabrielle McNaughton prowls and twirls with a series of guns, changing into black plastic pants and then into a sexy red dress? A suicide? A murder? Churchill's words, sung by the chorus to darker, more dissonant music, are all about feelings of fading, disappearing, dying: "Will I still have a shadow? Will I still have a mind? Will I still have eyes still see?" After a couple of days in some modern hotels, I can share graveyard feelings like those.

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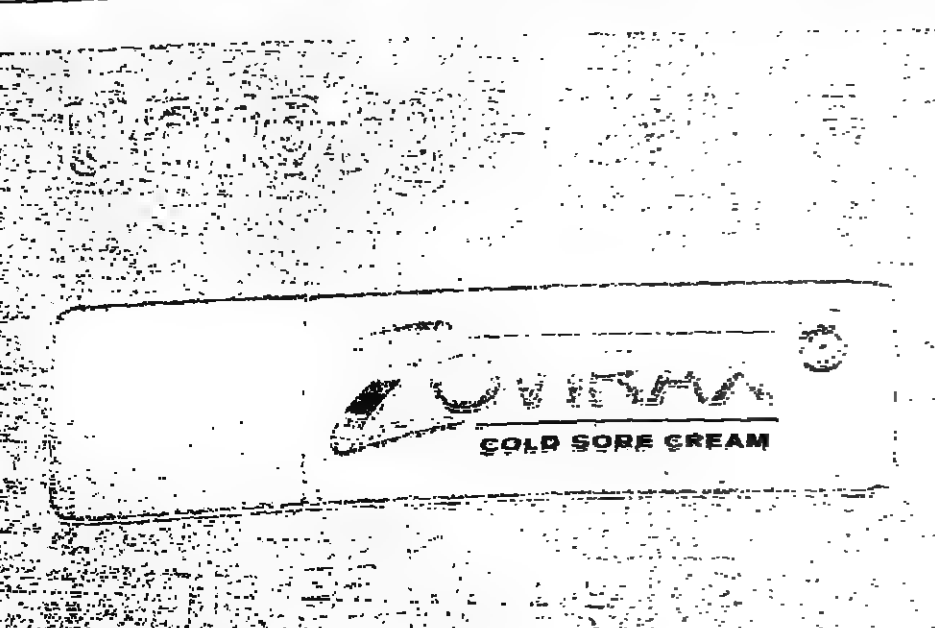
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THE TIMES ARTS



MUSIC 3
... but not
even the golden
voice of Angela
Gheorghiu lifts
Covent Garden's
dire *L'elisir*



TOMORROW
Paul McCartney
talks about
fame, money,
having a good
time, and his
new solo album

MUSIC: Richard Morrison meets the conductor Seiji Ozawa, in London with his superstar orchestra

A well-risen son of Japan

One night about ten years ago I was sitting in the Barbican Hall waiting for the London Symphony Orchestra to start the second half of a concert. Suddenly I became disconcertingly aware of the entire violin section craning round to stare at me. Or rather, at something just behind me. Curious, I turned round. Sitting in the row behind was a small, middle-aged Japanese man with rock-star hair and an ineffable smile.

Seiji Ozawa drew no attention to himself, but he had no need to. I have rarely heard an orchestra transform itself so thoroughly from humdrum to brilliant in the course of one concert. Especially when responding to a conductor who wasn't actually on the podium. I can't even remember who was.

Two thoughts occurred to me. First, I realised that I had never before seen a world-famous conductor sit through someone else's concert. Secondly, I sensed that the LSO doesn't gawp at any old baton-wagger who enters its hall. Ozawa was, and is, a charismatic figure. But he also has great humility and grace. Remember that unusual combination and you probably have the key to his music-making.

His performances speak of nobility and beauty, never aggression or stridency. He inclines towards reticence, never showmanship. On and off stage he is both a gentle man and a gentleman. Yet he has been at the helm of one of America's greatest orchestras, the Boston Symphony, for nearly a quarter of a century — far longer than any other music director in America.

The personality may be genial, but it is awesomely powerful, too. A classic Ozawa interpretation starts innocuously — you wonder what the fuss is about — but then gathers such spiritual force that, by the final whistle, you realise you have experienced an epiphany.

This weekend Ozawa makes an all-too-rare British appearance, not in the company of the Boston Symphony but with an

ensemble perhaps even closer to his heart. He founded the Saito Kinen Orchestra in 1981 in memory of his teacher, the conductor and cellist Hideo Saito, and staffed it with other former Saito pupils. Saito founded Japan's top music conservatory and was largely responsible for the postwar explosion of Japanese interest in Western music.

He must have been a remarkable man, because his former pupils have since risen to top positions in the world's top orchestras and conservatories. So the Saito Kinen Orchestra can only assemble, rehearse and perform on an occasional basis, and at vast expense (luckily, Japan is not short of generous and wealthy corporate sponsors). Nevertheless its Western tours have garnered fantastic reviews.

Ozawa believes that its playing standard owes something to a shared philosophy. "Saito remains a very strong influence, even though we have all grown up. We share the same musical phrasing; we perform orchestral music as if it is chamber music, which is what he taught us."

But he also points to the players' remarkable commitment. "There is no limit to the hours we rehearse. For me — used to working in America, where music is so unionised — that is the best part. The strange thing is that many members are based in America too. But when they come to Saito Kinen they have a completely different attitude. Once, on tour in Greece, they felt that they had not rehearsed enough in the hall, so they held section rehearsals in their hotel rooms. To see 12 viola players crammed into a bedroom was very funny — but it paid off the next day."

Ozawa believes that the Saito Kinen has brought new esteem to Japanese musicians in their own country. "Oriental people love music. In every small Japanese town now there is a CD shop. But the Japanese public still thinks

that Western musicians are in a higher class. In the same hall in Tokyo you can hear a Japanese orchestra one night, and the LSO or Berlin Philharmonic the next, and the ticket-price difference will be enormous. Not just double; maybe five times as much for the Western orchestra. Perhaps now the Saito Kinen has shown Japan that we can compete with the best."

It has certainly shown the

rest of the world. Now Ozawa has founded the Saito Kinen Festival, an annual ten-day teaching and performing jamboree in the "Japanese Alps" at Matsumoto. His model is the Boston Symphony's renowned Tanglewood Festival. "I must do more teaching, but I don't yet know how. You should really do it all year round. Perhaps I shall have to retire from conducting. To me, teaching is like a drug. To be

able to help young talents is one of the greatest things a musician can do."

Ozawa is 61, but nobody really expects him to quit the podium. He is one of the great natural talents — a figure who leaps with apparent ease across the East-West cultural divide at a time when such a transition was unprecedented. True, he benefited from Saito's rigorous training, and then the patronage of Bernstein

and Karajan. Nevertheless, when Ozawa came to Europe in the mid-Fifties — touring on a motor scooter borrowed "for promotional purposes" from a Japanese motor company — he had almost no Western cultural background. "I never heard an opera live until I was 23, nor a Mahler symphony," he admits.

That makes his subsequent career the more astonishing. Today the very essence of the

Western classical tradition seems enshrined in his music-making. What's more, thousands of hugely gifted Oriental musicians have followed in his pioneering tracks westward, revitalising our concert life. Many of them will be in London on Saturday. It should be some concert.

● The Saito Kinen Orchestra plays Schoenberg and Beethoven in the Festival Hall (071-460-1242) on Saturday at 7.30pm

Street life of Riley

ON PAPER it was one of soul music's more attractive colour schemes of the year, and it looked good on display too. Not to mention timely: Blackstreet's arrival in Kensington Gore came 24 hours after their single, *Don't Leave Me This Way*, had entered the British charts at No 6, a new personal best for the R&B contenders.

Brownstone, in the warm-up role, were breaking themselves back in. The Los Angeles vocal trio, signed to Michael Jackson's MJJ label, had substantial and immediate success with their polished debut single *If You Love Me* two years ago. After a personnel change, these latterday Supremes return to the front line next month with their second album, previewed by the single *5 Miles to Empty*.

Their performances were both vocally and visually curvaceous, but an unnecessary reliance on backing tapes, intended to bolster their

POP

Blackstreet
Albert Hall

live sound, only succeeded in removing a dimension from it.

In the four months since Teddy Riley's Blackstreet were last in the country on a hit-and-miss tour with Snoop Doggy Dogg and SWV, their stock has risen to new and deserved peaks — not only with this week's lofty foothold in our own Top Ten, but also in America, where their second album *Another Level* has now sold three million copies.

Riley has long been one of black music's most esteemed and pursued producers, but since he took a ranchback on his outside commissions has sharpened and their fortunes have soared. Here, their invigorating, influential 1996 hit from *Another Level* set, *No Diggity*, was the raucously received climax of another stirring show.

What is so endearing about Riley is his insistence on the old-school values of soul. The group may still come over as heirs to the estate of those Motown titans, the Temptations. But the sound of their four-way vocal interplay and their learned production values are utterly contemporary.

The difference between them and their copycats is in the Riley ruling that using samples is all very well — but use them to embellish a song, not to hide the lack of one. Influences, too, should be as broad as possible. For example, how many other street soul groups would consider adding a tap dance interlude, or trying a complete urban makeover of the Beatles' *Can't Buy Me Love*?

GERALD LARNER

PAUL SEXTON

OPERA: Doing the dirty on Donizetti's blameless comedy



Natale de Carolis and Angela Gheorghiu in the Royal Opera's dreary *L'elisir d'amore*

The Royal Opera's recent run of good revivals had to come to an end sometime, and it ran into the buffers at Tuesday's performance of Donizetti's comedy. The 22-year-old production has long passed its sell-by date, and looked old-fashioned even when it was new. Like all good comedy, *L'elisir* is at heart desperately serious, not that you would guess it from the vulgar farce being played out for much of the evening. The stylistic starting point seemed to be amateur Gilbert and Sullivan of half a century ago, with the chorus grinning like apes and forever waving into the wings, and for much of the evening I wondered what an adult audience was doing in 1997 paying good money to watch this juvenile, amateurish tush.

A halfway decent musical performance might have deadened the pain, but no such luck. The Catalan tenor José Bros, making his house debut as Nemorino, has a lot going for him — good musical

No fizz in this potion
L'elisir d'amore
Covent Garden

instincts, a quiet sense of comedy — but his voice sounded monochrome and thin, lacking the weight and juiciness essential for this music. Angela Gheorghiu has even more going for her — sound, technique — but for the most part she phrased woodenly and sang at a steady, word-free *forte*. For some mysterious reason, too, she was made to play Adina as cold and dead.

Natale de Carolis, also in his house debut, was an under-voiced Belcore and it was left

to Bruno Pola, the new Dulcamara, to sense disaster, take the performance by the scruff of the neck and give it a good shake with his entrance number. He may have worked a little too hard, but a singer with bags of voice who actually sang words and even seemed to understand them came as manna in the desert. The conductor Evelino Pidò set the style with inflexible beat and little attempt to coax something approaching Donizetti sound from the orchestra. There was little trace of the lyricism, wit and melancholy of which the score is compounded until the final duet for Adina and Nemorino, when singers and players started to suggest what riches the work can yield.

But it was far too late, and tended to confirm the impression that the show had not exactly been over-rehearsed. What a dreary, unworthy salute to the composer in his bicentenary year.

RODNEY MILNES

Strings to tug at the heart

CONCERTS

Vienna PO/Rattle
Birmingham

catching out the Vienna Philharmonic even now. Everywhere else the violin playing was not only impeccable but also enchanting in the variety of colour available at the quieter end of the dynamic range. And to hear this orchestra adopting a kind of period-instrument approach to the slow movement was a refreshing experience.

Having conducted the Haydn from memory, Rattle went on to do the same with Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*. That was a virtuoso achievement in itself. But where 23 solo strings are involved in 30 minutes of free and continuous contrapuntal development, it is surely the only way to avoid losing sight of the shape of the piece in a mass of textural detail.

Strauss's structural purpose was, in fact, always clearly in view. While the string players sustained clarity and cohesion with the security of a long-standing chamber ensemble, the conductor registered the emotional effect of every change of tempo as the intensity increased and as the elegy was restored at the end.

If CBSO supporters, hearing the Vienna Philharmonic in Birmingham for the first time in 62 years, felt just a little envious of their counterparts in the Musikverein, they might have found some consolation in the *Symphonie fantastique*. It is true that the applause was both enthusiastic and prolonged and that, one clarinet misfortune apart, they had heard some remarkably distinguished orchestral playing. But, even with Simon Rattle to fire them, this orchestra was from the start too respectable to reflect Berlioz's delirium. It was particularly noticeable in the *March to the Scaffold*, where the upper brass frus-

tratingly lacked the extrovert brashness of French (or even British) trumpets and cornets. But when there is such exquisite phrasing as we heard from the violins in the ball scene, and such lovely pastoral colouring as we heard from the cor anglais in the following movement, vulgarity is just inconceivable.

A tale of several cities

LPO/Altrichter
Festival Hall

struck: a world of bright, glittering, sometimes brash colour, in which orchestral sonorities were strongly characterised and highly spotted.

Mikhail Rudy was in extrovert, heroic mode, effortlessly dominating the texture despite his voluntarily imposed handicap.

If Altrichter's personality was already stamped on these two performances, it was in the music from Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (three numbers from the composer's first suite, six from the second) that he really came into his own.

The striding dance steps of the Montagues and Capulets in the opening movement contrasted strongly with the tender music for Juliet, the latter's expressiveness emphasised by the swaying, crouching presence on the podium.

There were appropriate stabbing and thrusting motions, too, in the fight music later on, with a violent depiction of the *Death of Tybalt*. Incisive brass and timpani added their contribution to a stirring account of *Romeo at Juliet's Tomb*, while the strings were equally impressive in such movements as the *Dance*, with its neat dovetailing throughout the texture.

BARRY MILLINGTON

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Afore the frumious bandersnatch

Peter Ackroyd celebrates the nonsensical predecessors of Carroll and Lear

There are forgotten areas, and secret histories, within the literature of this country. The music-hall songs of the late 19th century are as interesting as the poetry of Lionel Johnson or Ernest Dowson, for example, but they are not to be found in any critical survey of the period. Now Noel Malcolm has discovered another unfortunate omission: in this most original study, he has discovered the first stirrings of English nonsense. Everyone knows about Lear's *Jumbles* and Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, but who now remembers the inspired persillage of the "water poet", John Taylor, who in the early 17th century could out-Shakespeare Shakespeare with such inspiring lines as "From out the heels of squeamish magnitude" and "Then smooth thy brow with milk-white discontent"?

It is magnificent, but is it poetry? Mr Malcolm makes a persuasive case on its behalf, and reveals its part within a highly respectable literary tradition. But although its original may lie in German macaronics or Rabelaisian neologisms, English nonsense has a life and spirit of its own. It was one aspect of that great explosion of

language which marked the late 16th and early 17th centuries; it glided lightly and undid Donne with conceits both quizzical and metaphysical. Malcolm's book provides an anthology of the best, with lines such as "Oh that my Lungs could beat like butter'd peas" or "Mount meekly low, on blew presumptuous wings".

A case could in fact be made for nonsense as an intrinsic part of the English genius. It is related to that heterogeneity within a literature where matters oratorical, poetical and farcical can all be fastened together. It might be noted here that Nicholas Pevsner considered farce, and those eruptions of farce and vulgarity into sacred texts, to be a specifically English invention.

It is the humour found in the mock disputations of the 16th-century Inns of Court, as Malcolm suggests, and it is also the humour to be found in More's *Utopia*. But it is also the mainspring of theatrical farce, and represents the spirit of the London streets, when even in recent memory children could be heard chanting "Sam Sam, dirty

THE ORIGINS OF ENGLISH NONSENSE
By Noel Malcolm
HarperCollins, £18
ISBN 0 00 255827 0

old man, washed his face in a frying pan." It is the comedy of medley and drollery, which has no proper written history.

That is why the writers covered in this meticulous volume are now quite unknown to name and fame. All that does not aspire to "high" art tends to disappear from view, even though the more popular or "low" material may contain the most vital forces within the culture. Indeed, Malcolm tentatively suggests that the serious, or at least established, poets of the 17th century learnt something from the "water poet" and his colleagues. This movement from "low" to "high" is another very interesting feature of English culture — the stage lighting of London's theatres certainly affected Turner's paint-



Fool's paradise of nonsense verse

ings, for example — but, again, it has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

Yet nonsense can also be plain fun, and the verses which Malcolm celebrates were part of culture already replete with the mock love-songs, mock-recipes, mock-heroics and mock-encomia. In a formalised

and ritualised society, such parodic inversions or diversions can be a source of endless pleasure. But why should nonsense be pursued for its own sake? It is a form of liberation from orthodoxy, of course; and although it is indeed part of a tradition, it still encouraged inventiveness of the most private kind. That is why its most vigorous exponent was a "water-man", member of a "low" trade renowned for bad manners and filthy language while rowing their unfortunate passengers across the Thames. His success as a nonsense-poet may well be related to the wealth of dirty slang or sexual demotic all around him, but fundamentally it was just another way of being heard.

It is also possible that the crudity of the Thames somehow infiltrates apparently harmless and sedate nonsense. It would certainly be easy to create a lubricious subtext from such phrases as "Glisten from the Torrid Zones" or "Reach my fierce flye-flap". And Freud might have been surprisingly right in claiming that "cosmic nonsense" was related to infantile sexuality.

But Malcolm's impeccable scholarship does not allow him such speculations; he dismisses the notion of dreams, of folk-festivity or madness, as a source of nonsense. Instead he makes the very interesting point that these writers were engaged "in a highly self-conscious stylistic game". This is certainly the context in which we might place such later works as James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

It cannot be said that all nonsense verse is of a uniformly high standard. The lines of Taylor or "Anon" should be read sparingly and at short intervals. Otherwise the reader becomes dazed by inconsequence and smothered in trifles. But, at its best, it is delightful. The parodies of Marlowe's bombast and the "ink-horn" terms of 17th-century academics, for example, are very delicious.

The *Origins of English Nonsense* is a work of some wit, and itself tends towards parody of more solemn studies. Malcolm's book has all the elaborate paraphernalia of scholarship, complete with learned footnotes and a lengthy bibliography designed to promote the cause of nonsense. This book is as rare, then, as hedgehog's feathers or baskets of water.



White uncompromising

Love, death and longing

LIKE Jean Genet in *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Edmund White begins his ambitious autobiographical novel with the subject of death. A particular death, that of his lover, Bruce, from Aids. Concluding a trilogy of novels that began with *A Boy's Own Story* and continued with *The Beautiful Room is Empty*, White's most recent venture into fiction both celebrates and elegises the last three decades of gay life.

In his characteristically clear, unsparring prose style, he narrates a candid account of sexual profligacy. White's early fictional style was, by his own admission, baroque. Over the years, however, he has modified the richness of his language and re-tuned his voice into a more popular, publicly accountable mode of expression. The novel enacts a similar process of modification: the protagonist, a writer struggling to survive and gain recognition, is forced in mid-

Jeremy Reed

THE FAREWELL SYMPHONY

By Edmund White
Chatto & Windus, £16.99
ISBN 0 7011 3621 9

die age to abandon the sexual hedonism of his youth for a more austere and cautious life at that point when survival and identity become more literally imperilled.

Always a writer of profound psychological acuity, White takes on the grand themes of love and death with courageous mastery. The discovery of gay love in the narrator's transitional passage from youth to experience is inextricable in the novel from his responsiveness to sister's love. His emotional capacities are further tested by witnessing his sibling's mental suffering and by experiencing the loss of his parents. The life experience recounted is rich and unusual; for instance, in adopting his sister's teenage son and undertaking a spell as a surrogate parent, the protagonist is forced to face up to a very painful social truth: "I often said that I wasn't rich enough to be heterosexual and that children were beyond my means. Now I feared I'd become so burdened with expense that I'd never write again."

HOW do committed writers live? The public sees only the product, not the struggle that goes into creating it. Much of the tension in *Farewell Symphony* derives from the moving portrayal of a writer's attempts to sustain his formative art despite a lack of means and the vulnerability entailed by his calling.

That writing can redeem a life is very much the message of the book. Although it begins with the joyful encounter of experience in New York and Rome and ends with the writer living in Paris and mourning a generation liquidated by Aids, a spirit of affirmation and survival persists to the last. Faced with the breakdown of his youthful world, the narrator reflects how "these secret meetings — unpredictable, subversive — of reader and writer were all I lived for."

The *Farewell Symphony* is a monumental achievement of one man's celebration not only of his own sexuality but of an epoch's struggle to achieve a new gay aesthetic. The book gives voice to a life of uncompromising individualism and reaches a depth of compassionate tolerance rare in any writer.

Jeremy Reed's *Dorian* will be published next month by Peter Owen.

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Throwing light on reading

Roy Foster on making a nation with literature and language

SEAMUS DEANE'S novel *Reading in the Dark* — luminous, elliptical, with an ingeniously episodic narrative — introduced him to a wide readership: his new book, based on his 1996 Clarendon lectures at Oxford, epitomises the kind of work by which he was previously

known. Probably the most influential Irish literary critic of his generation, he has brought a ferociously engaged attention to bear on Irish literary history: besides a series of literary-historical studies, there is the massive *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, produced under his editorship and including some of his most incisive grapplings yet with Irish literature and what makes it — or makes it up. *Strange Country* might be seen as a continuation of this dialogue, and a commentary on the state of Irish literary-historical criticism.

The subject of Irish literature in English from the late 18th century might be made for Deane's kind of intelligence — tightly knotted, dense, ingenious. It requires facing up to a tangled inheritance, where narrative inventiveness is employed to negotiate colonial and linguistic intersections and assumptions recur again and again, often in concealed

forms. The themes which preoccupy *Strange Country* include unreality, alterity, stasis, invention and reinvention; the mechanisms include exaggeration, typification and resolution by means of collusive cliché. Others have visited this territory before (notably Declan Kiberd, David Lloyd, W. J. McCormack); Deane's contribution is to choose unexpected exemplars and to weave his themes back and forth across the four long chapters. He begins with Edmund Burke (on whom he has always written brilliantly), interpreting his *Reflections* as part of the new genre of travel writing: this constructs the image of Ireland as a "strange country" at war with modernity and in need of the imposed interpretations of "civil" literature; the theme is pursued through the ideas of "national character" as epitomised in the work of certain Irish writers (Maria Edgeworth) and by the lives of others (the poet *maudit* James Clarence Mangan). The translations of James Hardman in *Irish Minstrelsy* are similarly employed, as is the fiction of Bram Stoker (a writer who, like Elizabeth Bowen, has been seen more and more clearly as writing in — or against — an Irish tradition). Irish Gothic is

broader out from the beleaguered Protestant Big House into a distinctively Irish-Catholic tradition, though Mangan's themes as described here (doom, criminality, dream-sequences, father-figures, isolating illness, Promethean ambitions and the refusal of conventional religious consolation) would equally apply to Mary Shelley or William Beckford. Unexpected conjunctions are posited with great verve: Standish O'Grady is played against John Mitchell (Carlyle's both, after all) and Mangan against Tom Moore. Discussion of the idea (and



Stone diary: Moydrum Castle, Athlone; built 1814, burned in 1921. From *In Ruins: The Once Great Houses of Ireland*, Little, Brown, £18.99

ideology) of "national character" clears a logical if unexpected path to Yeats, Synge and "Celticism". All nearly ends in Joyce, though he too is treated to an illuminating conflation, with Flann O'Brien. "The vocation of 'non servium' of Stephen Dedalus had been replaced by the obedient functionary's job in the Civil Service. The fake nation, with its inflated rhetoric of origin and authenticity, had given way to the fake state, with its deflated rhetoric of bureaucratic dinginess. In the passage from the fantasy of one to the realism of the other, the entity called Ireland

had somehow failed to appear." The strength of the treatment lies in its historicising bent, and the developing theme of the failure of the Union between Britain and Ireland — crystallised for Deane not so much by the rise of Parnellite nationalism as by the catastrophe of the Famine.

In this he follows Parnell's predecessor Isaac Butt, and he makes good use of Butt's reflection that Irish matters such as land tenure would never be understood by the English as long as they used irrelevant English terms

for different Irish realities.

Deane ends with a consideration of the language of historians — specifically those of a so-called "revisionist" bent in the 1960s, like T. W. Moody and F. S. L. Lyons who, he believes, in considering themselves practitioners of an "impartial" art implicated themselves in the very process which they thought they were analysing. But the point is, surely, that this was a generation ago. The idea that to "revise" Irish history was to be *ipso facto* anti-nationalist no longer seems relevant: Irish historians are building literary and cultural analysis into

their work, while Irish literary critics are using historical insights to extend their discipline beyond the canonical confines prescribed in some other jurisdictions. The space between the disciplines is attracting new work which transcends the old restrictive polarities and the hoary political assumptions enshrined within them. The demanding subtleties of these lectures provide, in fact, both a case in point and an encouraging augury for the future.

Roy Foster's *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, Volume 1, is published by OUP, priced £25.

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The Scylla of No, the Charybdis of Yes

Mary Ann Sieghart

Were I a man writing this review, I would probably start with some sexual anecdotes of my own, comparing my adolescent experiences with those of Naomi Wolf, a woman of almost exactly my age. That I have chosen not to do so illustrates precisely the point that Wolf is making. That she has chosen to do so marks her out as a woman of great courage.

As Wolf points out, "Women can still be 'ruined' by having a sexual past to speak of. Women learn — still — that any sexual 'past' can be read as 'promiscuity', and that the taint of 'promiscuity' can lead to social or professional censure." Even in fiction, novels of male sexual awakening abound — the initiation into adulthood is seen as an experience critical to defining the male identity. Yet the female equivalent is rare, and the pleasure and eroticism of teenage girls' sexual discovery tend to be skirted over.

The prevailing fantasy is that, while men have a sexual "past", women have none. Women can talk to each other about their sexual experiences but not to the wider world. Wolf, in *Promiscuities*, smashes that taboo, both directly by writing about herself, and indirectly by relaying the confidences of her pseudonymous friends.

The result makes fascinating reading, especially for a woman of my generation. So much is recognisable: the fear, the excitement, the anxieties, the unspoken rules. What most shines out from these pages is how much harder it was then to be an adolescent girl than a boy, even for Wolf in Haight-Ashbury, in San Francisco, in the 1970s — possibly the most sexually liberated time and place in the modern Western world.

The contradictions facing Wolf — and other girls of our age — were manifold. Advised to "let it all hang out", we risked being regarded as a "slut" if we did so, a label that could not be shaken off. And the lines between acceptability



Naomi Wolf: reveals her past, illuminates the present

and sluttishness were simultaneously undefined and ruinously punishing if crossed. A girlfriend of mine recalls going to American summer camp and being labelled "frigid" and a "lesbian" because she did not like the teenage dances. Say no to a boy and you may be gay; say yes and you are a slut. Indeed the same boy who accuses you of frigidity until you finally give in to his entreaties may well turn round and call you a slut the next morning.

Thankfully, life improves for women as they mature. And maybe teenage girls today are lessler than we were

and less constrained by rules largely drawn up by boys. But the sadness about the experiences of Wolf and her friends is that theirs was the only female generation in at least a hundred years that could enjoy sex free of physiological danger. Aids has slammed shut the window that opened oh, so briefly then.

The cover of Wolf's book will probably be seen as anathema by fellow feminists. An erotic picture of a naked female body, it will doubtless encourage many men to look inside for titillation. But they will discover more about female sexuality in the process than

they ever will by reading *Playboy*.

Yet it is the very purism of some feminists that has helped men to vilify them as man-haters. *Who's Afraid of Feminism?* is a collection of essays that explores the nature of the backlash. It is a shame that much is written in almost incomprehensible jargon, for the idea is worth exploring.

Some women have joined the backlash, often encouraged by male editors who get a kick out of reading the journalistic equivalent of female mudwrestling. But most of feminism's enemies are men. What none of the writers in this book really acknowledges is that it is a measure of feminism's achievement that men are fighting back.

Workplaces are generally competitive arenas, where one woman's success can mean another man's disappointment. Who can be surprised that, as women start to gain what men have always assumed to be their birthright, anger will mount? We have not yet conquered the career citadels, but I have no doubt that, as we begin to do so, the backlash will become more ferocious. As long as we recognise their reaction for what it is, and do not allow them to make us feel guilty, ugly, selfish or monstrous, we shall have conquered a psychological citadel of our own.

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Raymond Seitz lassos two books on America's favourite shoot-'em-up actor and finds his mystique elusive as a runaway steer

Celluloid stills of a nation on the wane

You can't judge a book by its cover. This is especially true when two books have essentially the same cover, as these two do.

There, on both jackets, is the classic Red River photograph of John Wayne in boots, buckskin and bandana. He's standing tall and easy, peering into the expansive distance from beneath the slouchy rim of his cowboy hat. A holster is strapped to his side and a Winchester dangles from his right hand.

Wayne is big and confident. His right foot is planted forward and his left hip is shunted outwards. He is alone, tough and ready. He is, as Wills writes, "slumbrous power", or as Coyne writes, "benevolent power". What a guy!

Garry Wills makes much of this famous cow-poke pose. It is, he says, the classic contrapposto of Michelangelo's and Donatello's Davids, but this time wrought in flesh and dressed up in blue jeans. Wayne is, he says, "Manifest Destiny on the hoof".

Michael Coyne eschews Florentines, though he accepts there are universal reflections of Ulysses and Lancelot in Wayne's western persona. But as the apotheosis of the Hollywood cowboy, Coyne suggests, Wayne is his own man — or his own myth.

JOHN WAYNE
The Politics of Celebrity
By Garry Wills

Faber, £20
ISBN 0 571 8176 2

THE CROWDED PRAIRIE

American National Identity in the Hollywood Western

By Michael Coyne

IB Tauris, £25
ISBN 1 85064 040 0

According to Wills, Wayne was also a phony. He hated horses. He had to think twice before saying "ain't". When many of his Hollywood pals went off to the Second World War, Wayne avoided service. To compensate, the superstar became the superpatriot of the postwar American screen, defending the walls of the Alamo and riding to the rescue of the imperiled. In the real Hollywood of the 1950s, he abetted the McCarthyite witch hunts and later joined the hyper-conservative John Birch Society. Wills stops just short of declaring Wayne dragged America into the Vietnam War.

Despite this personal history, as rendered by Wills, John Wayne today — long after his death — remains America's most popular, all-time movie idol. His films, the author explains, embodied the mythology of the grand American West, and while the world around him may have shifted to the point of disorientation, John Wayne continued to represent his solid, reassuring politics of gender (masculinity), race (white), ideology (patriotism) and character (self-reliance). Seemingly both invincible and vulnerable, Wayne appeared to be the unwavering expression of American society's contradictions.

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Wills arrives at this conclusion through a forensic analysis of Wayne's prodigious work, especially the 13 collaborations with John Ford. He offers detailed synopses of numerous story lines and assigns psycho-social significance to almost every gesture and grimace. He sketches diagrams of the alternating seating plans in *Stagecoach* to find subtle meaning in this seminal film. Alas, Wills's aim to capture the mystique of John Wayne gets lost on his curbing room floor.

Michael Coyne's exposition of the American western is neither as pedantic as Wills nor as provocative. His is a straightforward survey of the rise and decline of this Hollywood genre as it reflected

America's innocent enchantment and then wholesale disillusionment with its own identity. He agrees that *Stagecoach* (1939) was the pivotal film that elevated western movies above the Grade B league of children's matinees and the first to explore adult themes with originality and intelligence. As a parable of the outlaw-hero, *Stagecoach* was the progenitor of all the drama and clichés which followed in the golden age of westerns.

Over the next 30 years or so, the western was a mirror of America's political and social gyrations. In the postwar Forties, movies such as *Red River* idealized frontier notions of freedom, individuality, mobility, community and American exceptionalism. In the Cold War

Fifties, the hero turned loner, alienated from a conformist and often overbearing society — *Shane*, for example, or *High Noon*.

Vietnam initially romanticized the square-jawed defence of the downtrodden (*The Magnificent Seven*) or the outnumbered (*The Alamo*). But as the real costs and horror mounted, the movies told of frustration and self-doubt (*Major Dundee*). In fact the brutal, failed war abroad, plus the mayhem of political assassinations and urban riots at home, brought America face to face with the hollowness of its own ideals. Coyne writes. Inevitably, the once-pure western degenerated into a glamourised catatonia of violence and nihilism (*The Wild Bunch*). Eventually the

genre had nowhere else to go. In 1974, Pauline Kael, writing in *The New Yorker*, declared "the western is dead". Coyne agrees, stating simply that whatever followed was elegiac (*The Shootist* or comic-book Clint Eastwood's spaghetti westerns).

Both these books deserve space on the shelves of true movie buffs. They are insightful. But each is limited. Wills performs a cinematographic virtuoso, but he is laboured, choppy and self-indulgent. Coyne's book is formulaic, and though he is more faithful to the western saga, both real and imagined, his conclusions are prosaic. The American identity is far more complex and fluid than either suggests.

Views to the kill

HERE is a crisp new look at the battlefields of 1939-45, in the form of papers read in 1995 at a conference at Edinburgh University. It tackled the perpetually interesting question, why do soldiers fight? Several distinguished names in the military history field such as Keegan, Bond, Erickson, Strachan, Bartov and Holmes took part.

They established that much of the infantry fighting in Europe in these years was even more expensive in men than the slaughterhouse of the Somme and Passchendaele during the Great War. Hew Strachan, in a concluding chapter that ties memories of this century's First and Second World Wars together, describes the conference as a pioneering one: its papers explain to a wider public where the cutting edge of current military historical scholarship lies. Two sections, Hamish Henderson on Sicily and Steve Weiss on Provence, give direct personal accounts of action — two combined operations, followed in one case by adventures with the local resistance; the other essays analyse, often from unexpected angles, Reina Pennington, for instance, records that nearly a million women fought in the Red Army's front line: one female sniper

M. R. D. Foot

TIME TO KILL
Edited by Paul Addison and Angus Calder
Pimlico, £14
ISBN 0 7126 7376 8

claimed over 300 victims. Angus Calder, contributing himself as an editor, should, contrasts Evelyn Waugh's account of the debacle in Crete with Dan Davin's, which is able to take a New Zealander's pride in the New Zealander's achievements there.

The African, Irish, Indian and Canadian shares in the fighting each get a chapter, and two German historians — Forster and Schulte — discuss the impact on the German fighting man of Nazi ideology. For 50 years the Wehrmacht's old soldiers kept up the pretence that they had played no part in the atrocious conduct that marked the war on the eastern front: a pretence now discarded. American attitudes to combat are discussed as well. Theodore A. Wilson deplores the Americans' system of assigning the stupidest men to the infantry, while Reid Mitchell shows how well, nevertheless, United States infantrymen adapted themselves to mid-century combat.

Omer Bartov has some particularly suggestive notes on the differing French and German pictures of the Great War, and the way those differences affected their armies, as well as their novelists. Martin S. Alexander examines the French catastrophe of 1940, showing that some units fought well while others ran away: he inclines to blame the high command rather than the ordinary poilu. "French losses during the battle were higher, proportionately, than those for a comparable period in the fighting at Verdun in 1916."

Len Deighton, who was present, delighted in the conference, and remarks in a foreword that this "is the most stimulating collection of military history that I have yet encountered." His enthusiasm is well-founded.

Nonconformist in all he does

Justin Wintle

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

By R. S. Thomas

J. M. Dent, £20

ISBN 0 460 87639 2

Propos my own recent investigation of the poet R. S. Thomas, Paul Ferris made a telling comment in *The Spectator*. The "critical respect" I extended towards Welsh cultural nationalism, Mr Ferris wrote, ought to make me friends in Wales, "though probably it won't". By and large his prognostication has proved correct. The Welsh intelligentsia is so addicted to savouring its wounds that any balm proffered by an outsider is added anathema.

The wounds to Wales have come from the inside as well as outside. The country may have been trounced by the beastly English, but in Nonconformity the Welsh embraced an ideology that has scarred their character. Predicably the literature has been strongly affected. Even the best known escapes from Wales, Caradoc Evans and Dylan Thomas, traded on furnishing metropolitan readerships with caricatures of their own kind; those loyal to their nation are too often unable to cast their nets sufficiently wide to cause more than a ripple on the larger lake.

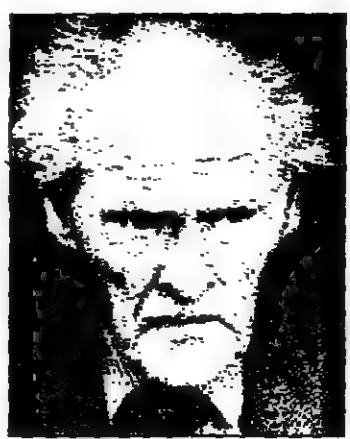
In all this R. S. Thomas is and isn't the exception. He is a commanding poet precisely because he has given universal expression to minority consciousness. Yet in two respects, at least, Thomas as Welsh patriot is atypical. He did not acquire the Welsh language until he was 30; nor is he Nonconformist. For 40 years he served as a priest in the Anglican church. Yet it is often hard not to behold in him the quintessential Welshman.

Autobiographies brings together two short texts that have been translated before, and two longer ones that have not: *Former Paths* and *The Creative Writer's Suicide*, and *Neb* ("No-one") and *Blyddyn yn Llyn* ("A Year in Llyn"). That the latter pair, which easily constitute Thomas's most ambitious prose works, should now be made more widely accessible is worthy of celebration, apart from the pellucid excellence of Jason Walford Davies's translation.

Neb is a deliberate essay in

autobiography. It recounts the poet's awkward childhood in Holyhead, his difficult years at college and at theological college, his several rural ministries, and the obsessions of his retirement. Readers of his poetry will recognise his yearning to conflate those things that most matter to him: Wales, the Welsh language, nature and God. "The winter would roll away to give way to the spring," runs a typical trope, "just as the stone was moved from the tomb to allow the risen Christ to appear." But there is a stiffness in the joints. In *Neb*, writing about himself in the third person, he remains ill-adjusted; and curiously, it is in the less-known *Blyddyn yn Llyn*, cast in the form of a naturalist's diary, that the elements harmonise. There at last the Cymric ayatollah half-drops his mask, and shows us the quieter, but also pleasingly mischievous ghost within.

Justin Wintle's *Furious Interiors*: R. S. Thomas, God and Wales is published by HarperCollins at £20.



Thomas: atypical Welshman

Truth and other contingencies

Michael Gove is haunted by histories not to be

Journalism is not only the first draft of history, it has become increasingly a form of income support for professional historians. The trend, intended to illuminate, tends to distort. This book, although edited by one of the most fecund academic amphibians, the don and polemicist Niall Ferguson, provides an effective antidote to the greatest problem with 800-word history, the danger of determinism. It does so in a manner every bit as fluent and a good deal more entertaining than much journalism and most academic history.

Newspaper editors, anxious to provide readers with an authoritative explanation of complex contemporary events, have been disposed to hire historians who try to show how the conflicts of today are reflections of the past. In analysis the mirror is preferred to the microscope and the war in Yugoslavia, for example, is explained through the looking-glass of Balkan history. The successful colonisation of colonies by historians has seen the original occupants of newspaper space take on the habits of the new settlers. No election opinion poll commentary now seems complete without references to historical patterns and parallels.

Although the reader is much better-informed, he is often none the wiser. Instant history too often sees today's actors repeating patterns laid down for them by their predecessors. The people of Northern Ireland, Bosnia or Rwanda become "victims" of history. Voters at this election are doing as their parents did in 1964 or their great-grandparents in 1906. Once a pattern is established to explain the past, it is assumed



But could it? *It Happened Here* (1963) shows the imagined German occupation of England

VIRTUAL HISTORY

Alternatives and Counterfactuals

Edited by Niall Ferguson

Picador, £20

ISBN 0 330 351 32 X

that template will govern human action in the future. The great virtue of *Virtual History* is that it puts a lorryload of dynamite under the determinists.

The book shows, from the English Civil War to the collapse of Communism, that no outcome was preordained. It may now appear that the only surprise about the collapse of Communism is that it did not come sooner, even though as late as the Sixties Harold Wilson feared the virtues of planning would see the Soviets bankrupt as it was, the Soviet Union might still have been with us. Mark Almond's rightly argued essay makes a powerful case for a

chain of unrelated events working on an individual's position. Mikhail Gorbachev, and bringing about the end of the Soviet system.

Diane Kunz shows how absence, not presence, can work to the good by imagining a world where John F. Kennedy survived. At the end of the essay one wants to pin the Congressional Medal of Honour on Lee Harvey Oswald. By showing how the deeply flawed JFK would, most likely, not have withdrawn early from Vietnam nor built the Great Society, she simultaneously shores up LBJ and demolishes Oliver Stone. It is a satisfying mixture.

If Diane Kunz is unsentimental for Americans, Andrew Roberts is reassuring for Britons. His essay exploring alternative British approaches to Hitler succeeds both in showing how unlikely any policy but considered appeasement was in the Thirties, and also, once the war started, how unlikely was anything other than outright resistance. The thought of a Britain supine and collaborating after conquest haunts the imagi-

nation still and the examples of France and the Channel Islands are reproofs to complacency. Roberts is, however, typically forceful and persuasive in asserting British exceptionalism, showing how the pattern of conquest on the continent would be disrupted here. Where Kunz and Almond depict individuals overturning history's assumptions, Roberts's hero is the British nation.

Almond, Kunz, Roberts and several of the other contributors, including Ferguson, are all broadly conservative and many of their essays are congenial reading for conservatives. Not much is these days. But the most satisfying Tory aspect of the book is neither its romanticism nor the reassuring affirmation of certain outcomes, but the persistent emphasis on the contingent and circumstantial. The writers' household gods are Burke and Oakeshott. In that respect their work undercuts the deterministic drive of historical journalism while satisfying the appetite such writing arouses.

Waiting for Hong Kong Phooey

Erica Wagner

KOWLOON TONG

By Paul Theroux

Hamish Hamilton, £16.99

ISBN 0 241 15269 3

cials. This latest novel, set just before the handover of Hong Kong ("the Chinese Take-away") presents us with Neville "Bunt" Mullard and his mother, Betty, who preside over their garment factory, Imperial Stitchings, and hope to make a

killing on fancy embroidery when all the Hong Kong clubs and societies have their Royal removed. Bunt and Betty live in a strange, almost prewar colonial time warp, their television a Bush, their toaster a Dualite, their radio a thoroughly British Roberts. Their house, Albion Cottage, is pervaded by a quite English damp, which "gave the interior the ripe cheesy odor of a mortuary". Betty knits egg-cosies and sloshes her ill-fitting dentures in her mouth: balding Bunt lies to Betty about his visits to prostitutes; both of them despise the "Chinky-

Chonks". It is not hard to imagine the same odour of damp and decay emanating from them both.

The story of *Kowloon Tong* is one of Chinese encroachment. The mysterious Mr Hung makes a generous offer to buy Imperial Stitchings — an offer which, it soon becomes clear, is not to be refused. Bunt's resistance is met by the "disappearing" of one of his factory girls, Ah-fu. It is this disappearance that reveals the emotional core of the novel: Ah-fu's terrified flatmate is Mei-ping, Bunt's occasional lover. Bunt's experience of love, if it

can be so called, has been limited to febrile encounters with bar-girls. But somehow, Mei-ping is different: "he imagined himself wanting to hang around after sex and not go back to his mother". Theroux catches his weak desperation, his confused fondness, when Bunt, hoping to keep her out of Hung's clutches, rings Imperial Stitchings where she hides behind the screen of the answerphone. "May," he calls, trying to get her to come to the phone. He makes her name English, the best compliment he can pay.

If Bunt and Betty are unpleasant, the rest of the cast are even worse: the devious Monty, broker of the deal; the vile Hung, whose white carpet mysteriously disappears at the same time as Ah-fu. Is it clear, in this novel, that Theroux dislikes the Chinese? It is clear that Theroux doesn't like anyone very much, but that's not a surprise, and in any case that's not the point. His eye is sharp, his language vivid — Hung pokes the buttons on his telephone "as though putting out its eyes" — and if he does not make you like Bunt, he makes you see him in all his fear and despair.

Does this novel have a happy ending? You may guess that for yourself.

WHAT do D. H. Lawrence and Paul Theroux have in common? "You have to have something vicious in you to be a creative writer," the former wrote. "God save me from being 'nice'." Theroux is well-possessed of that something. He has rather cornered the market in memorably vicious, or at least highly unpleasant, characters: think of Allie Fox in *The Mosquito Coast* or the eponymous hero of *Millroy the Magician*. Think, too, of the choked squalors of *distress* — emitted not least by his brother Alexander — provoked by his fractured and fractious "autobiography", *My Other Life*. In *Kowloon Tong* we are treated to another round of Theroux spe-

Bargains of the week — relax at a seaside villa in the sunshine of Corfu or cruise the St Lawrence River

FLIGHTS

■ **AB AIRLINES**, a low-cost carrier, launches a twice-daily Gatwick-Lisbon service on May 1. Return fares from £119. Details: 0345 464748.

■ **EASYJET** has boosted its Luton-Amsterdam schedule to five flights a day. One-way fares start at £35. Details: 01582 700058.

■ **THERE** are only a few days left to sample Debonair's cur-pire mid-week fares between Luton and Mönchengladbach (near Düsseldorf), Munich, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Madrid and Rome. Book by April 30 for one-way fares starting at £39. Details: 0541 500300.

■ **MAJOR TRAVEL** has a Caribbean seat sale. Return fares departing in the first half of May cost £299 to Barbados, £285 to Antigua and £339 to St Lucia. Details: 0171-485 7017.

■ **AIR Tickets Direct** has a £180 Manchester-Madrid fare flying KLM via Amsterdam. Details: 0990 330321.

■ **TRAVEL BUG** has a special Air France ticket to New York, flying out business class — from London, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Southampton — and returning on Concorde. Cost is £2,550. Details: 0161-740 3948.

HOLIDAYS

■ **CRUISE** the Nile for a week for £299 a person, including full board, shore excursions and a flight from Gatwick to Luxor on Sunday, with Crusader Travel. Details: 0181-744 0474.

■ **BRUGES** for £87 a person over the early May bank holiday is available from Inntravel with a Dover-Calais crossing on May 3 and two nights' B&B. Details: 01653 028862.

■ **BRONTE COUNTRY** by coach from £139 a person is on offer from Motts Travel, starting from Buckinghamshire on May 2 and including three nights' full board accommodation. Details: 01296 330666.

■ **SAVINGS** of £150 a person are available on holidays to Taormina, on a mountain plateau in Sicily, from Citalia, with flights from Gatwick on May 3 and 10. Priced at £499 for a week's half-board accommodation. Details: 0181-080 5533.

■ **CORFU** seaside villas and villas with pools are on offer in May from £236 a person in a party of four, including flights from Gatwick. Details: 01992 552331.

■ **CALIFORNIA** fly-drive holidays are available in May

from £325 a person from Fun-way Holidays. The price includes non-stop flights from London, a week's car rental and discount coupons. Details: 0181-466 0222.

■ **TORONTO** and Montreal, with four nights aboard a St Lawrence River cruiser in between, feature in a week-long tour available from All Canada Travel and Holidays from £822 a person. Flights on selected dates from several UK airports. Details: 01502 585825.

■ **LITHUANIA** at discounts of up to £75 a person is available from Intra Travel, with three-night breaks now costing from £281, including return Heathrow-Vilnius flights. Details: 0171-323 3305.

■ **THE GAMBIA** Experience is offering holidays to coincide with this year's Roots Festival from June 14 to 21. Prices start from £289 for a week and include Friday daytime flights. Details: 01703 730888.

■ **PAINTING** holidays in France's Gers region for a week from May 3 are on offer from Gascony Secret and include full-board, individual tuition and return Portsmouth-Caen ferry crossings. Price: £400 a person. Details: 01284 827253.



Long Bay Beach Resort, Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands, is available from £845 a person a week, including flights, from Caribbours. The Secret Adventure Company at the resort will arrange mountain walks, water sports and more. Details: 0171-581 3517.

HOTELS

■ **HOLIDAY INN** this week launched its Weekend Plus short breaks programme, with offers at 200 hotels in 130 countries worldwide. Room rates start at £30 a night, rising to £154. Details: 0500 897121.

■ **WOODLANDS Park Hotel**, at Colham in Surrey, has a gardening weekend package available for both the May bank holidays. Price for two nights' accommodation and dinner and tea on one day is £147 a person and includes visits to local gardens. Details: 01372 843935.

■ **CHILDREN** aged five and upwards can join in the "Wee Wonder" golf programmes at Foxhills Country Club, Ottershaw, in Surrey. Cost for adults (children under 12 stay free in their parents' room) is £75 a person a night based on a minimum of two nights. Green fees and private lessons extra. Details: 01932 572050.

■ **NEW** theatre menu at Brown's Hotel, in Mayfair, costs £22 a person and can be split pre- and post-theatre. Details: 0171-518 4121.

■ **THE BREAKERS HOTEL** in Palm Beach, East Florida, has a summer package from May 27 including £125-worth of credit for sports activities.

Prices start at £80 a room a night for a minimum of two nights' stay. Details: 031 501 655 6611.

■ **WEEKEND BREAKS** offering tours of public and private gardens are available from six Hilton Hotels in the UK and the south of France. An alternative is needlecraft weekends, culminating in the "Cross-stitch Christmas" break at the Swindon Hilton in November. Details: 0800 550002.

■ **A NEW** free short breaks brochure from Thistle Hotels includes details of holidays ranging from champagne breaks to Scottish skiing holidays. Details: 0345 585707.

■ **BIRMINGHAM** Grand Most House is offering free entrance to Cadbury's World or the National SeaLife Centre for guests staying on the weekend of May 23-25. Price is £19.50 a person a night, based on a minimum of three nights. Details: 0500 123220.

■ **SUMMER** packages at the Old Course Hotel at St Andrews start from May 1 at £130 a person a night, based on double occupancy and including dinner and breakfast. Lunch in the newly-opened conservatory costs £17 a person. Details: 01334 474371.

FERRIES

■ **THE ISLE** of Man Steam Packet Company has a mid-week return from Heysham to Douglas for £99 for a car and two adults. Motorcycles and riders £49, foot passengers £25. Details: 01624 645645.

■ **SALLY HOLIDAYS** is offering May Bank Holiday breaks at Etelinge theme park in Holland from £58 a person a night, based on a three-night stay, including return ferry and accommodation. Up to two children under 12 travel free. Details: 0181-395 3030.

■ **P&O FERRIES** has £145 peak season Dover-Calais fares for booking by April 30. The fare, for a car and up to nine passengers, is £169 thereafter. Details: 0990 980555.

■ **IRISH FERRIES** has a two-day Holyhead-Dublin ticket for £132. Passengers booking a standard return by August 31 also qualify for a second return costing £59, for use September 15-December 15, on the Holyhead and Pembroke routes. Details: 0345 171717.

■ **SCANDINAVIAN** Seaways has a four-night break in Hanover, leaving Harwich on April 29, from £234 a person, including return and four-star accommodation. Details: 0990 333111.

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City airport to break into profit

By HARVEY ELLIOTT

LONDON City Airport has been regarded as a loss-maker for years. But this year it seems certain to break into profit for the first time as it handles more than the critical number of a million passengers.

Business travellers are switching from Heathrow and Gatwick to a rapidly growing number of airlines operating from the airport in east London.

In March the number of passengers grew by 69 per cent compared with the same month last year. Airport executives now believe that the airport could become a key gateway for millennium visitors to nearby Greenwich.

For the moment, however, the airport concentrates on attracting the high-spending business traveller. Jon Horne, the airport director, says: "We like to regard ourselves as the 'Dorchester' of airports." He is so keen on establishing the airport as the most prestigious in London that he has hired a commissionaire to welcome passengers.

"We don't like talking about profitability, but we have definitely turned the corner," he says. "Flights are fuller, passenger numbers are going

up daily, and as Heathrow gets fuller, and therefore more congested, business travellers are realising how quick it is to get into the centre of London from the Continent."

The European business traveller is setting the pace. Ten of the 11 airlines that operate from the airport to 18 destinations are owned by companies from the Continent and registered there. Only one is on the British register — and even that, Air UK, is 45 per cent owned by the Dutch airline KLM. The average flight carries 40 per cent of its passengers from Britain, compared with 60 per cent from Europe.

But London City does not care where the airlines are based so long as they fly in and out. The airport has consistently lost money since it was opened in October 1987, accumulating debts of well over £50 million by the time it was sold to Dermot Desmond for £23.5 million in 1995.

The Dublin-based businessman, who also owns the luxurious Sandy Lane Hotel in Barbados, bought it at the right time. The four-engined BAe146 jet was just beginning to make an impact at the airport, bringing all the key European cities



Welcome: a commissionaire greets passengers to London City Airport

within its 1,000-mile range. Simultaneously, Heathrow and Gatwick were becoming increasingly congested and road and rail access to London, especially from Heathrow, was considered long, tortuous and often unreliable. London City's runway was extended, longer hours of operation were allowed and the number of aircraft movements rose from 30,160 to 36,500 a year.

After a few years of apparent stagnation, Docklands is again booming. The vital Jubilee Line extension, due to open in March next year, will bring Westminster within 20 minutes of the airport. Sadly, the planners did not have the vision to run the Tube line to the airport, so shuttle buses will have to cover the last half mile between the airport and Canning Town station. Theoretically,

the airport could handle 3.65 million passengers a year, provided they all used the 100-seat jets. But the airport owners would be happy if half that figure was achieved before 2000.

The airport is determined to remain a dedicated business airport where check-in is only ten minutes before departure and the airport's calm is never disturbed by the crowds common at conventional airports. Even at peak times it is unlikely that there will be any more than 200 passengers in the terminal building at any one time.

London City has become so successful that other cities throughout Europe are considering copying it.

As European aviation deregulation takes effect, more airlines are expected to move into London City, starting with an as yet unnamed British carrier opening a network of domestic services to link Britain's main cities.

The question will be whether business travellers are prepared to pay more to fly in a much smaller aircraft from a much smaller airport than they are used to. The original planners were convinced they would be and now, after nearly ten years of operation, their dream appears to be coming true.



IRA tactics have a global impact

The IRA clearly understands the importance of travel and tourism to Britain — even though so many of the politicians who want our votes next week do not yet appear to appreciate its worth.

But the disruption, especially to air travellers, caused by a few cynical phone calls could have been so much worse had it not happened this week.

Gatwick airport, for example, was expected to handle about 50,000 passengers on Monday, and to have 595 aircraft

departing. In the peak season it could be double that number. Nonetheless, there was near-chaos within minutes of the first warning call as an estimated 4,000 departing passengers — many of them business

travellers — were ordered to evacuate both terminals. Aircraft already heading for Gatwick had little option but to land, guided by air-traffic controllers in the tower which, being airside, was not affected by the mass evacuation. Within hours, more than 130 were parked on any available piece of concrete near the single runway, many of them filled with passengers who had already flown for up to ten hours, only to be forced to wait for another five.

Fortunately, Gatwick has often practised — on paper, at least — what to do in such an emergency. And the disruption, frustrating though it was, was kept to a minimum by crisis-management teams operating from hastily requisitioned offices.

Convincing politicians were soon praising the "bulldog spirit" shown by "British travellers" in the face of such economic terrorism: but this was far from a purely British problem. On average, 35 per cent of the 24 million passengers who use Gatwick every year are foreign. And on Monday morning the number would have been particularly high as aircraft with passengers from around the world were using Gatwick as a junction to change planes.

It is the growing international nature of the industry that has led many big airlines to tone down their national identity to become as "global" as possible.

British Airways flies to 180 destinations in 85 countries. More than 60 per cent of its revenue is earned outside Britain. Because 80 per cent of passengers on any aircraft can come from outside Britain, it is little wonder that the airline

insists that all cabin crew speak at least one other language and bases its cabin staff in 15 countries.

United Airlines has 950 of its cabin staff based in Britain to provide "an element of home culture" for British passengers on its transatlantic flights and thousands more around the world. Whichever country flights are coming from or going to, there are people on board who speak the language and understand the culture. There are magazines and movies in that language, food from any country the aircraft flies to, and signs and symbols that mean the same anywhere in the world.

So when the IRA threatens Gatwick, it threatens not just British travellers but those from all over the world.

Now the world knows what it is like to be at the receiving end — and learns to loathe the IRA as much as we do.

BA keeps self-write tickets

By STEVE KEENAN

BRITISH Airways has been forced into an embarrassing U-turn over plans to introduce electronic ticketing across its UK network.

An outcry from business travellers, particularly in Scotland, has prompted BA to retain its paper-based Timesaver tickets, due to be withdrawn on April 30.

An estimated one in five Scottish business passengers on Shuttle routes uses Timesaver, which allows them to write their own tickets and pay later.

But BA's UK Distribution Manager, Gavin Halliday, admitted market reaction had forced the rethink.

"In terms of the initial objectives, I suppose it is a U-turn, but it is a response to what the market is telling us. The message from Scotland is that they want paper-based tickets."

BA's reversal is a setback in pursuing the E-ticket route, which the airline hopes will save the company millions of pounds in distribution costs.

The carrier says that its distribution costs are twice that of fuel, and second only to staff costs.

It will continue indefinitely to accept self-write Timesaver tickets, although it is going ahead with plans to withdraw the Timesaver machines.

Mr Halliday denied that the reversal threatened the future of E-ticketing, which is now being used by 3,000 travellers daily on BA's domestic routes.

"The reaction has been strong, but keeping Timesaver is about enabling customers to use what they find suitable. It is driven by the consumer."

Airport-rail link set for the autumn

By CHRIS LOCKWOOD

THE FIRST stage of the £400 million Heathrow Express fast rail link from central London to the airport is on track for an autumn launch.

Initially, the service will operate from Paddington to a specially built station called Airport Junction near the Four Seasons hotel. Journey time will be 30 minutes and coaches will connect to take passengers to terminals at Heathrow.

From June 1998, the express service is due to start in earnest, with departures every 15 minutes directly to the airport in around 16 minutes.

Airline check-in desks will be available at Paddington, and the service will operate in three classes, according to Jeremy Job, the marketing director for the project which is owned and operated by BAA.

In its first full year, Heathrow Express is expected to carry 6.5 million passengers, rising to more than 10 million a year by 2000.

Travelling at speeds of up to 100mph, the new fast trains will run non-stop to the airport serving all four terminals. Land has also been set aside to extend the service to terminal five if it is eventually built.

The news will come as a relief to those who have suffered the seemingly endless Piccadilly underground line link which stops at all points along the way, and mixes airport-bound passengers with local travellers in an uneasy blend of briefcases, suitcases and shopping bags.



Brampton Island near the Great Barrier Reef is one of five luxury tropical isles for sale by Qantas as it consolidates its air travel business

FIVE tropical holiday islands in Australia are to be sold by Qantas, the national airline, Tony Dawe writes.

It has decided to concentrate on the extremely competitive air travel business and shed its other interests.

The airline acquired the islands, including Lizard Island, the "Jewel in the Great Barrier Reef", when it took over an internal airline last year.

However, it has decided to sell because marketing the islands is distracting the com-

Qantas disposes of island assets

pany from its main business.

The asking price has yet to be disclosed but, as it can cost tourists £500 a night to stay on the islands, the final figure is certain to run into many millions of pounds.

A handful of British tourists are among the holidaymakers who visit the exclusive islands, which feature in a number of brochures available in Britain, including Select from Austravel, Lizard

Island is described as "spectacular, pristine, private and the very best place for snorkelling and scuba diving".

Bedarra Island, close to the reef, has accommodation for 16 couples in two-level villas overlooking the sea and backed by a rainforest ridge. The other islands for sale are Brampton, Great Keppel and Dunk.

Qantas has been urged to

dispose of the islands by British Airways executives. The two airlines have a joint management team in the Far East which is trying to fight off growing competition.

Rivals include Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific and the joint Malaysian Airlines/Virgin operation. BA holds a 25 per cent stake in Qantas.

The Australian airline has set up subsidiaries to market

holidays in Australia and the Far East. These include Qantas Holidays, which offers deals linking cheap flights with discounted hotel accommodation, and Jetabout, which offers a wider range of packages.

The company has just launched a series of land/cruise holidays as part of a plan to attract more British passengers to its luxury liner Reef Endeavour, which operates three and four-day cruises from Cairns to the Great Barrier Reef.

hours a day in flight, compared with 13 hours for a Boeing 747, so although it is now getting long in the tooth, in flying terms its age is equivalent to a four-year-old jumbo jet. It has left Heathrow exactly on time on 74 per cent of its flights and within 15 minutes in 94 per cent. BA insists, therefore, that it is still in good condition and will continue to fly for the foreseeable future.

Tiny British Mediterranean Airways, now a franchise partner of big-brother British Airways, began operating direct flights from Heathrow to Alexandria in Egypt this week. The service will operate three times a week.

The Royal British Legion reports a sharp increase in the number of young people wanting to visit the graves of relatives killed overseas. "In the past only about one in five of our clients would have been 50 or under," said Piers Storie-Pugh, who runs the Legion's Pilgrimages Department near Maidstone in Kent. "Now, well over half travelling are 50 or below, with many a lot younger. Whereas the older travellers would have been visiting the grave of a brother, fiancé or ex-comrades, these younger people are frequently going to visit a grandfather's resting place."

A new range of "video-postcards" — travel videos from a selection of favourite British resorts — is now on sale at £4 each. Advance orders for the videos, the first batch of which show Devon, Cornwall, Blackpool, London, Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey, have exceeded 250,000.

The over-50s are to have their own "grown-up" radio station under plans now being finalised by the Saga holiday company. Saga is convinced that its section of the market has been ignored by the broadcasting authorities. "Every radio franchise which has been awarded has gone to those who want to target the youth market and to provide nearly non-stop indie or dance music," says Tim Bull, Saga director. "We believe there is a more mature audience who want to listen to classical music, to plays and to other programmes — access to which they are now denied."

TRAVEL NEWS IN BRIEF

GUYANA is the newest destination for British tourists seeking something different, Tony Dawe writes. Holidays to the only English-speaking country in South America have been included for the first time in the latest brochure from Trips Worldwide, launched last night.

The Bristol-based company, which specialises in bespoke holidays, is offering tours which take in the country's three main features: coastal scenery, rainforest and savannah.

"Guyana is an exciting country which is just opening its doors to tourists," says Hamish MacCall, Trips director. "Its rivers, wildlife and food are superb, and visitors know they are unlikely to bump into more than a dozen other tourists while there."

The new brochure also features holidays to Mexico, all the Central American countries and some Caribbean islands.

The European Transport Safety Council has launched a campaign to cut the number of road deaths from 45,000 a year to 25,000 by 2010. That is not a misprint. On average, 45,000 people a year die on Europe's roads. This compares with an average of 1,207 killed in commercial flights throughout the world each year.

Two lawyers, a tax expert and a counsellor on intra-European trade have been signed up by a Belgian hotel to offer free advice on the intricacies of community law to guests checking into the 17th-century property. Despite its age, the Hôtel les Tanneurs at Namur on the banks of the Meuse, has been fitted with every modern business communications device, including a cyber café. The owner, an English-speaking former lawyer, offers a range of business advice for his clients, and has persuaded other experts to stand by to give the first consultation free, after which the meter starts ticking.

The largest riverboat to operate through the Thames bridges arrives in London next week after its launch at Lowestoft. The 1,000-ton Silver Sturgeon — twice the size of any other floating restaurant on the Thames — was built at a cost of more than £2 million for Woods River Cruises and will have three air-conditioned bars, two



with packages starting at £399 for seven nights.

Stung by a series of recent criticisms over the alleged unreliability of Concorde, British Airways has produced the supersonic jet's "health notes" for the past 12 months. There have been 18 cancelled flights out of 1,400 and pilots have reported 22 problems, they say. But the flagship, which still manages to turn heads wherever it goes, has made 44,000 trips and spent 127,000 hours in the air of which 100,000 were at supersonic speed. It spends only three



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RACING

BHB told to tighten belt to qualify for extra funds

BY RICHARD EVANS, RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE British Horseracing Board (BHB) was yesterday effectively ordered by the Levy Board to cut out financial waste if the sport is to have extra prize money.

Racing's paymasters promised to increase their prize-money contribution in 1998-9 by £500,000 to £29 million - but only if the BHB tackles the costly duplication of television coverage on racecourses involving RaceTech and SIS.

The ultimatum comes as the Levy Board braces itself for an expected £5 million cut in income next year because of a change in the way levy paid by big bookmakers is calculated.

Faced with the likely £5 million fall in 1998-9 income, the board is planning cuts in other heads of expenditure. The increased prize-money grant is dependent largely upon the BHB cutting the cost of integrity services and reducing the costly duplication of television coverage in which

Derby it is the Italian variety. Before racing began, Sue Ellen, managing director of United Racecourses, spelt out her recipe for trying to attract crowds back to the Derby.

"You don't have to be a racing expert to enjoy the Derby. We want it to be a national day out; a party on the Downs and an event which everyone can come to. It is the people's event and one of the themes is to give the Hill back to the people and try to recreate the spirit we had before," she said.

A catchy Epsom "conga," written to create a Derby anthem, will be broadcast on radio and backed up by poster and press advertising. Spectators on the Hill will be able to watch racing from the rails for the first time in years.

However, the main concern facing Epsom's officials yesterday was the disclosure that Vodafone is unlikely to renew its sponsorship of the Derby unless the television audience for the classic is around five million. "We are not threatening United Racecourses in any way. We would be very happy to continue with this sponsorship if it is successful this year," Terry Barwick, Vodafone's director of corporate affairs, said.

If success hinges on attracting such a large television audience, the chances of renewal are slim. "We will not make a decision until after the Derby," Barwick added.

Gay Kelleway hoped last year that Musheer, third to Bahareh in the Champagne Stakes, might develop into a classic horse. Imagine her disappointment when the horse's owners decided over the weekend to move the colt to another yard.

However, the bubbly trainer gained some compensation when Major Change won the City and Suburban Stakes. The victory was the first leg of a 287-1 treble for Kieren Fallon, completed by Supply And Demand and La Modiste.

Frankie Dettori was not so fortunate. He was unseated by Move With Edes in the concluding Warren Limited Stakes and suffered mild concussion. He was stood down for today and tomorrow.



Corket, left, is about to fall at the last, leaving Noyan and Williamson to collect the Heineken Gold Cup

Countries united by racing as English raider lifts Gold Cup

Andrew Longmore on the friendly rivalry that pervades the Punchestown Festival

I will surprise a few to learn that the second day of the Punchestown Festival passed off without incident or an irrevocable severing of Anglo-Irish relations. True, there were a few pickpockets about and ladies were warned to take care of their handbags with the hand not used to rescue their hats from a persistent wind. But, on the whole, English still talked back and if the common subject was the horse, trivial enough when compared with the menace of the IRA and the future of Northern Ireland, the shared pleasure in racing could be felt in every corner of Punchestown.

I only mention this because an article appeared yesterday morning in an English tabloid newspaper calling, only a little facetiously, for all Irish horses, jockeys and trainers to be banned from the Cheltenham Festival as a reprisal against the IRA for its campaign of bombing and disruption on the mainland.

Apartheid has been brought to its knees by sporting isolation, the argument went, so why not the IRA? Nothing to do with trade, commerce, the economy or anything trivial. Nelson Mandela was lifted to power by the refusal of England to

play cricket or rugby against South Africa, which is as ungenerous as the belief that a ban on Irishness at an English racecourse will somehow succeed where generations of politicians have failed.

Sports journalists are constantly in danger of elevating sport to a significance way beyond reality. England and Ireland, north and south, need as much common ground as they can get. Racing is a trifling cause for joy, a pastime pursued by both peoples through a century of troubles. And there is no better symbol of unity than the Punchestown Festival.

If any proof were needed of the common ground, it came in the Heineken Gold Cup, the big race of the day, which was won by an English horse, trained by a Yorkshire-based Irishman, ridden by an Irishman and owned by a Scot. Just for good measure, Noyan has French and Canadian blood, though a few years ago winning a selling race was about the height of his ambitions.

"He was completely barmy for a while," Hal McGhie, his

owner, said. "The first time he raced he was awash with sweat. He took ages to settle." Two trainers tried to tame the volatile temperament before Richard Fahey finally extracted the talent lying deep within the chestnut gelding.

Fahey began riding in his native Ireland before he moved to England, married Leila, the daughter of Peter Easterby, and set up training headquarters in Malton three years ago. He now has 35 horses, but Noyan is one of only five he runs over the jumps.

Yesterday was the biggest pay-day of his career, though nothing compared to the windings of the owner, who doubled his first prize of £37,200 by putting £6,000 on his horse at 6-1 and was worried about how he might ship the money back to Scotland.

McGhie claims an Irishman's luck with his horses. He only bought Noyan because the original bidder could not stump up the money. His luck held again yesterday when Corket, a stride or two behind the winner at the last, took a

nasty fall and hurled Trevor Horgan face down onto the Punchestown turf.

Horgan was taken to hospital, suffering from concussion and a torn shoulder. Noyan, under the expert guidance of Norman Williamson, strode on to win by 15 lengths from Bobbylo.

For McGhie, victory brought back memories of the day 33 years before when he had watched on television at the family home in Lockerbie as his father's horse, Magic Court, had won the Champion Hurdle. His father was a blacksmith, who also ran a milk business. "But his whole life was horses." A suitable description of half the crowd at Punchestown, as it happens, for English no less than Irish.

The chatter yesterday night as the racecourse emptied was of the future of Istabraq, easy winner of the Champion Novices' Hurdle and, say wise men, a certainty for the Champion Hurdle next year, and of Robert Thornton, a champion jockey in the making.

BEVERLEY

THUNDERER

2.10 Cathedral 3.40 Gharib
2.40 Double Gold 4.0 Classic Beauty
3.10 HEN HARRIER (nap)
4.40 Ajayib

The Times Private Handicapper's top rating: 3.10 HEN HARRIER.

Our Newmarket Correspondent: 3.10 Tough Leader, 3.40 Teclio, 4.40 DREAM OF NURMI (nap).

GUIDE TO OUR RACEDAY

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TOTE JACKPOT MEETING

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SIS

2.10 FULFORD MAIDEN STAKES (£3,743.50) (14 runners)

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1996 MAJOR QUALITY 3-20 D. Horgan (13-5) J. Fahey (12-1)

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CRICKET: SURREY STRUGGLE TO MAKE INROADS INTO SOMERSET BATTLING ON UNRESPONSIVE SURFACE

Harden enjoys slow pace of life at the Oval

By MICHAEL HENDERSON

THE OVAL (first day of four: Somerset won toss; Somerset have made 311 for five wickets against Surrey)

IN THE brave new world of English cricket, Surrey have long since regarded themselves as the bravest of all. This season, they will be known on Sundays as Surrey Lions (well, south London is a bit of a jungle) and, to set the tone, Chris Lewis stares out with improbable ferocity from a promotional poster. Their aim, apparently, is to bring some "fun" back to one-day cricket, which is rather like putting sugar in syrup to improve the taste.

Off the field there are also changes. The club has exchanged its famous chocolate-and-silver blazer for one of those striped things that could belong to almost any club in the world. "It was good enough for Jack Hobbs," a former player said yesterday, leaving the rest unsaid. Tradition, we know, means little to the modern commercial mind, but in the rush to shape the future, cricket is in danger of neglecting aspects of the past worthy of greater respect.

Adam Hoolioake, leading Surrey for the first time as the club captain, lost a toss that he would have preferred to have won and, after leaving out his younger brother, Ben, the bowlers found a slow pitch unresponsive. Indeed, it was odd to see Stewart standing so far back for much of the day. Only Tudor got the ball to go through regularly with decent pace and "carry".

Surrey used no fewer than

eight bowlers, and none of them will be entirely happy with their day's work. Salisbury took his first wicket for them when his top-spinner baffled Lathwell but he still gives the batsmen too many hits. Lewis interspersed some good balls with some bad ones. As usual, he did not much bother where his feet landed and so a long day brought 69 extras. Last year, in the fixture between these teams at Taunton, Surrey conceded 79 extras in Somerset's first innings of 558.

Benjamin, who limped off with a calf strain after pulling up in his seventh over, can be largely excused. He might have had Lathwell caught at third slip before he went off

Scoreboards 47

but Butcher raised his hands too slowly to take a ball that was, to be fair, travelling fairly quickly. Some might argue that it was not much of a chance at all but Mark Waugh has held ones like that, and that is the level Butcher aspires to reach. Closer to home, Nick Knight has snaffled a fair few.

It was good to see Lathwell playing freely again in that bottom-handed way, although he appeared to be bringing his bat down straighter. He found the boundary nine times in his fifty, most pleasingly with a cover drive that brought up his half-century, and Somerset will be all the better if he can recapture the form that made him such a good player to

watch four years ago, when Australia were last here. Dermot Reeve, the new Somerset coach, has a major job to do here and does not lack initiative.

Bowler's half-century was a more sedate affair. He made 207 in the match last year, the best score by a Somerset player against Surrey, and he seemed intent on matching it. Just before tea, after he had completed a century stand with Harden, Tudor nipped one back into him and he was convincingly leg-before.

The rest of the day belonged to Harden in all his pomp. On and on he went in that prosaic way, determined to see Somerset through to a formidable first-innings score. Watching him bat is like a rural ride in Lincolnshire, without the churches. There are few interesting features. The landscape seems to go on for ever and the wind-picked sky is heavy with dark clouds.

He was accompanied towards the close by Holloway and Burns, two of the three wicketkeepers in the Somerset team. Perhaps they will take it in turns to keep at different ends, while the third acts as long stop. Now that really would bring some fun to the game.

Surrey have appointed Keith Medlycott as their assistant coach. He replaces Tony Pigott, who left the county last month. Medlycott, 31, whose playing career with Surrey ended in 1992, took 357 first-class wickets with his left-arm spin and scored 3,684 runs. During the winter he was coach to Northern Transvaal.



Tudor managed to extract pace and bounce from a slow pitch at the Oval yesterday

Warwickshire, Russell forced on to the back foot

By JOHN THICKNESSE

CARDIFF (first day of four: Warwickshire won toss; Glamorgan, with nine first-innings wickets in hand, are 44 runs ahead of Warwickshire)

NEITHER with bat nor ball at Cardiff did Warwickshire display the potential that has persuaded bookmakers to make them favourites for the county championship. Winning what in hindsight looks to have been an unlucky toss, they were bowled out 20 minutes after lunch for 151.

Glamorgan ended a sunny day seemingly all but impenetrably placed at 195 for one. Hugh Morris and Steve James kept out Allan Donald with notably little trouble until James was bowled by him after an opening stand of 190. Already short of the England opener, Nick Knight, who is nursing the left index finger he broke in New Zealand, Warwickshire suffered another casualty before the start when Tim Munton, their captain, ruled himself out after testing his back strain during training. Had he been fit, he might have taken a different view of the pitch from the acting captain, Andy Moles, and availed himself of the assistance that Steve Watkin and Darren Thomas made such good use of for Glamorgan.

With a month's batting behind them, Warwickshire might have backed themselves to treble the modest score, because the pitch was never treacherous. Varying in pace between one end and the other, however, and offering bowlers from the Cathedral Road end encouragingly lively bounce before lunch, it posed enough problems for out-of-practice batsmen to need their wits about them. Watkin, 6ft 3in, who after a few overs located the ideal length from which to make the odd ball kick, was not flattered by his figures, while only a loose last over of his second spell, which cost 16, took the edge off Thomas's.

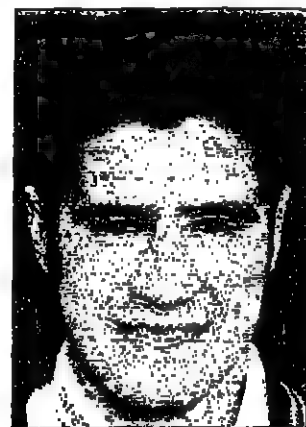
From the relative ease with which Ostler handled Watkin's bounce, his might have been the crucial wicket after the quick loss of Moles and Wasim Khan. Shaping to turn Croft into the leg-side, Ostler was deceived either by change of pace or by lack of turn, the England off-spinner making good ground to take a plunging caught and bowled halfway down the pitch.

Ostler had 35 minutes of Watkin, and by waiting until the last moment to decide whether to play the ball or shoulder arms, was never drawn into a stroke against the lifting ball. Piper fell to one such in the over after Ostler's dismissal, caught at short leg

from a fend-off, to make it 43 for five. But Penny was the recipient of the day's only really vicious ball, a flyer off a length from Thomas, when he was switched to Watkin's end, which clipped the outside edge as it exploded past his eyebrows.

One or two early-season strokes were played, the most aggravating by the left-hander, David Hemp, who after six seasons with Glamorgan was making his Warwickshire debut. Within moments of driving Thomas for a perfect four through extra cover, he was caught in two minds by Croft's first ball, and patted back a gentle caught and bowled.

While Watkin and Thomas were making the ball lift, occupation had its hazards. Smith, deciding attack was the best form of defence, made 36 off 39 balls, hitting five fours and a big straight six off Croft, and though he married the innings with his final stroke, it was his example Giles and Donald followed in adding 51



Thomas: bowled well

in 35 minutes for the ninth wicket, Warwickshire's highest of the innings.

There were only a handful of moments in Glamorgan's earlier stages when James or Morris looked in difficulties.

In Donald's third over, James brought off an expert knock-down from arm's height, keeping the ball well clear of Khan, and in his fifth, Morris, at 17, survived a fast slice low and wide to Giles's right in the gully. But generally the ball was going at pace off the middle of the bat.

With Morris setting the pace initially, before being tied down by Giles, the slow left-hander, in his fifties, the 100 stand came in 29 overs, and by the 47th Glamorgan were ahead. If Warwickshire had taken a wicket for every 50 times they shouted encouragement to a bowler, they would already be deep into Glamorgan's second innings. As the game stood overnight, however, there is a fair chance the home side might not need one.

Hostile Malcolm quick to make England case

By PAT GIBSON



Malcolm: six wickets

CANTERBURY (first day of four: Kent won toss; Derbyshire, with six first-innings wickets in hand, are 216 runs behind Kent)

IF, AS David Graveney says, everybody is under consideration for an England place this summer, and that runs and wickets will be the criterion, then Devon Malcolm could soon be renewing his acquaintance with the Australians.

Malcolm, whose Test career seemed to be over when he fell out publicly and bitterly with Raymond Illingworth in South Africa the winter before last, simply carried on where he left off last summer by

taking six for 74 yesterday, and Graveney, Illingworth's successor as chairman of selectors, was there to see it.

He must have been impressed. On a pitch that was no quicker than one would expect at this time of year, Malcolm, 34 now but looking as fit as he has ever done, bowled with genuine pace and hostility. Not only that, he also bowled with a control that has often seemed beyond him.

His performance gave Derbyshire first blood in an intriguing contest between the counties that finished second and fourth last season, but Kent did not take it lying down. Alan Ealham and Steve Marsh gave their total a measure of respectability with a seventh-wicket stand of 94

and then Martin McCague, another of England's forgotten fast bowlers, took three quick wickets as Derbyshire were reduced to 35 for four.

The day had begun with an incident the like of which no one on the old St Lawrence ground could remember seeing before. Derbyshire took the field with a player — Kevin Dean, the left-arm seamer — who was not in the team that Dean Jones, their captain, had exchanged with his opposite number, Marsh, and when Jones put him on to bowl the sixth over, Stuart Anderson, the Kent secretary, marched out to the middle to protest.

He was soon joined by Marsh and there was a long delay while captains and umpires discussed the situation.

Eventually play resumed with Anderson explaining: "The options seem to be either to start the game again with the right team or for us to accept, in the interests of cricket, that it was a genuine mistake." That is what they did, although it would have been interesting had it been Dean and not Malcolm who promptly began to make inroads into the Kent batting. Long was yoked and Ward bowled before Cork got into the act by having Fulton caught behind for a stubborn 43.

DeFreitas looked far more of an England bowler in taking three cheap wickets, including that of Wells, who played resolutely in his first innings since his move from Sussex, but it was Malcolm

who finished off Kent just when Ealham and Marsh were beginning to take the initiative.

Marsh, who still seemed to be smouldering over the earlier incident, hit nine fours, three of them in one over off Dean, in his 57 off 99 balls, and Ealham did his chances of an England recall no harm by striking 11 fours in his 72 before he ran out of partners.

Then it was McCague's turn. Anything Malcolm could do, it seemed, he could do just as well as he removed Rollins, Adams and Barnett at a personal cost of 14. Headley joined in with the wicket of Jones and by the close only one thing seemed certain: that the match would not go the distance.

Robinson brings Sussex cheer

By SIMON WILDE

HOVE (first day of four: Northamptonshire won toss; Northamptonshire have scored 288 for nine wickets against Sussex)

THIS was the day the jokes about Sussex's futile season stopped and the county's husk of a team took to the field. As was liable to be the case, the players had the first laugh, bowling and fielding their hearts out. When one of your remaining assets is your enthusiasm, you might as well show it. Whether it can withstand a hard summer is another matter.

Much to the delight of their deckchair supporters, none of whom looked as though they had been involved in a revolution lately, they had claimed their first bonus point by 12.22pm. By then, they had curdled the cream of Northamptonshire's batting — Loye, Bailey and Curran all leg-before — and every time the visitors threatened a substantial recovery, Sussex's willing workhorses fought back.

The best of the bowlers was extraordinarily — Mark Robinson, who was salvaged from another season of league cricket with Hull to bolster Sussex's dwindling seam bowling resources and would not have got a game but for an injury to James Kirtley.

The prospect of seeing the promising Kirtley had brought John Barclay, a member of England's management advisory committee, to the ground. In the event, he watched one of county cricket's confirmed journeymen take five for 71 from 28 overs on his debut for his third club. Three of the wickets came in

nine balls during his final spell.

Robinson, 30, has not gained pace since last playing for Yorkshire two years ago — Moores stood up to him all day — but his probing off-stump line was more than enough for Northamptonshire, the county with whom he started his career. Another former Yorkshire bowler, Jarvis, took three for 51.

This pair was ably supported by the inexperienced Keith Newell, Amer Khan and Phillips. Khan, a signing from Middlesex, is attempting to fill Ian Salisbury's shoes and though he does not turn the ball as extravagantly as England's leading leg-spinner, he rarely strayed from line and got one or two deliveries to really bite. In one pre-season match he took five wickets.

Newell, for his part, may become one of the chief beneficiaries of Sussex's bloodletting. An all-rounder of 25, his opportunities have been limited but he spent the winter working hard on his game and can now move the ball either way. He took the second wicket of his first-class career when a sharp off-cutter had Warren caught at slip.

Unfortunately for Sussex, their fate in this match may have been largely sealed by the toss, which they lost. Rob Bailey, the Northamptonshire captain, took one look at the driest pitch he has seen at this time of the year and left out Boswell to accommodate a second spinner, John Emburey. Half-centuries from Montgomery and Capel and 43 from Penberthy may have already given him enough runs to play with.

Hampshire waste Connor's haul

By IVO TENNANT

CHELMSFORD (first day of four: Hampshire won toss; Hampshire, with three first-innings wickets in hand, are 143 runs behind Essex)

ANOTHER season of four-day cricket, another three-day match. Or, quite conceivably, a finish by the second evening. Seventeen wickets fell at Chelmsford yesterday, some to decent fast-medium bowling and others to the conditions. Essex were dismissed, mainly by Cardigan Connor, for 245, whereupon Hampshire, far from consolidating, had to concern themselves with avoiding the follow-on.

They had struggled to 103 for seven by the close. Cowan taking four of their wickets. Some grass had been left on the pitch and the ball swung intermittently, which was all too much at this stage of the season. Especially, that was for Hampshire, who are without Robin Smith, who has Achilles' tendon trouble.

It is 14 seasons now since Connor first played for Hampshire. He was not capped until 1988 and is now in his benefit season. Indeed, he is the quintessential beneficiary. Rather than concentrating on his fundraising events — it is not being unkind to say he would not be on until first change in most county sides — Connor was given the new ball and bowled Essex out in three spells. He finished with seven for 46.

As well as a grassy pitch, there was some cloud cover. Even so, to give first innings to a side whose first four included Gooch, Hussain and Stuart Law was a bold decision by Stephenson, whose

seam attack could not remotely be described as strong.

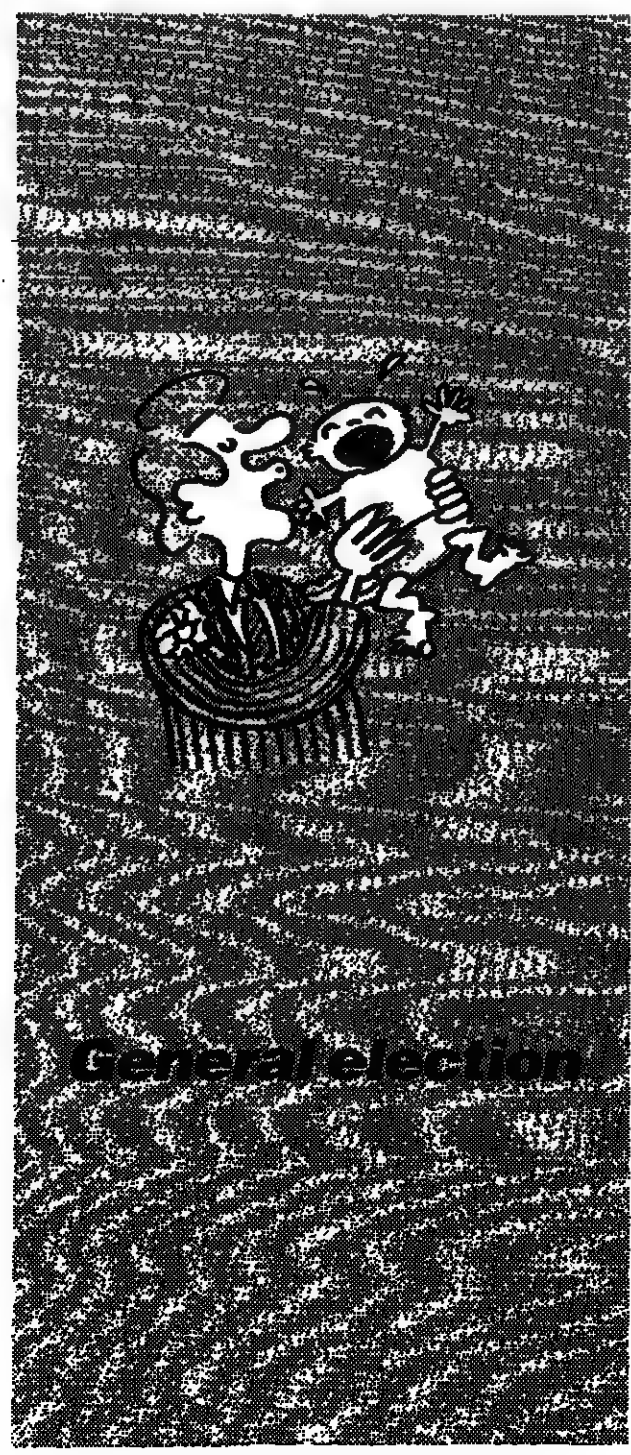
Gooch, having completed the London Marathon in a respectable 3hr 53min in preparation for his 25th season of first-class cricket, was beaten by one that cut back into him. So, too, was Prichard, whose 65 was the leading score.

The other five wickets that Connor took had more to do with the failings of the batsmen. At one stage, Essex were 180 for three, but then Irani and Robinson both went to Connor, the former caught in the covers off a leading edge and the latter edging an intended square drive. There were few contributions from the tail and a total of 246 seemed far from enough.

Until Hampshire batted, that was. Cowan, whose winter was spent playing club cricket in South Africa, bowled with the fervour that brought him into contention for an England A party. He had Laney and Keech taken in the slips, Gooch holding a notably sharp catch above his head, and was fortunate enough to remove Hayden with a long hop.

Looking to swing to leg, the Australian edged to Hyam, who was standing in for the injured Rollins. Stephenson and James went to Irani and Danny Law gained his first wicket for his new county when Kendall missed an attempted drive through mid-wicket.

A fourth day is not likely to be required. And since this is a Saturday, will be enough to make Peter Edwards, the Essex general manager, lachrymose too early in the season.



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Where do you draw the line, in the end?

Well, we're all for television breaking taboos in a good cause. But sometimes, after a session watching ordinary, peak-time documentaries, a critic can feel all shaky and tight-lipped. It's like being one of those WPCs in the vice squad routinely exposed to snuff movies. "What did you do today?" they ask. "Don't want to talk about it," you blub.

Now, one doesn't like to complain. But last night, while the vast majority of viewers sensibly entertained themselves with an evening of soaps, *ER* and European Cup football, it was my lonely, brave job to watch *Modern Times: The End* (BBC2) — an unsensational but very challenging contemporary Helen Richards about the modern way of funerals. As everyone else ran off laughing and skipping and waving rattles, I stared miserably at the stubby short straw in my fist, and swallowed uncontrollably.

"Look at this body burning in a crematorium furnace!" *The End* commanded. I looked up and gulped. "Yes, you do. That's a human face! Now, hang on, where did all the others go?"

The End was ultimately a very reassuring film, but it was impossible hard to watch. Was this legitimate voyeurism, or not? Here was a dead woman manhandled into a cardboard coffin, still with her mouth and eyes open; here was another dead woman's body being pumped with embalming fluid through a tap in her neck. In an up-market funeral parlour, a glib salesman listed his products, with the speed of an auctioneer. "It's like buying a car," he kept saying. "Like buying a car." Meanwhile, other people had opted for woodland funerals (in big willow baskets) or green funerals (or burial at sea).

But it was the sight of the embalmed woman that will linger

longest in the mind. Filmed from directly above, her body was long and thin, and as the fluid was introduced, two operatives shockingly manipulated her limbs, presumably in the cause of circulation. One sees dead bodies all the time on television, but this was a new category of experience: those thin white arms and legs being circled and bent, respectfully, gently, methodically. I never thought I'd take this particular old-coder line of argument, but surely there are some things that just shouldn't be seen?

Footie viewers would switch over occasionally, of course, to see how I was getting on. But they would catch a glimpse of something grim, and hastily retreat again. In *The End*, we saw the operations backstage at the crematorium (the bit you never see). A coffin shoved into the furnace, the big lumpy remains



Lynne Truss

raked out and tumbled in a special machine to produce fine ashes. Despite the screen evidence, I still don't believe ormaie coffins are really burned, incidentally; it seems obvious that with so much money at stake, they are emptied out and refilled within the hour.

"We're watching Kenny Everett on Channel 4," sang a few more siren voices. But I knew my duty. Like Odysseus, I lashed myself to

the settee, out of reach of the remote control. "Come and watch Kenny Everett," they sang. "It's all in the best possible way." "So is this," I replied staunchly. "It's just that I can't cope with it too well." A pair of daughters dressed their dead father for a woodland burial, placing thick white socks on his feet, combing his neat white hair. "What about a vest?" one of them said. The nice woodland-burials lady didn't mind. "Did he normally wear one?" "No," said the daughter, her voice cracking. "But it's a winter."

The End was certainly informative. Cardboard coffins, non-religious services, burials in fields — all handy to know about. Now that it's over, I'm glad I've seen it, but it's somehow impossible to be critically objective about it when you've spent 50 minutes in a state of his heart-thumping anxiety about what you might see next. How could I trust Helen Richards

(a woman I've never met) not to impose too far on my broad-mindedness? After all, she made me see a human skull burning in a furnace, which was quite enough.

Over on Channel 4, *Heroes of Comedy* was indeed about Kenny Everett — a man noted for his total inability to take anything seriously, and therefore a heady antidote to *The End*, like sniffing ether. It turned out that Kenny loved walking in the Yorkshire Dales, and said he'd like to be buried there. It also transpired that he had a "deep-rooted spirituality" — although, weirdly, it was Jeremy Beadle who said so. But mainly he crossed his legs in wild spidery arcs and said "All in the best palnissible taste," because the combination of legs, boobs and bearded faces always brought the house down.

Clips from the old telly shows brought it all back: Kenny's anar-

chic humour and off-the-cuff visual gags, all performed to the guffaws and cackles of the off-camera floor technicians. At the time, this selective audience seemed rather clever, modern ideas; now, in the era of Chris Evans, it just looks self-referential, narcissistic. But it's true, as Cliff Richard said: the influence of Kenny Everett is so big it's impossible to calculate. What isn't true, however, is that audiences loved him, forgave him anything, and never got tired of him.

Remembering Everett's funeral in 1995, a friend exclaimed "All those presenters!" Evidently nobody could believe Cuddly Ken wouldn't pop out of the coffin, announcing it was all a joke. In a way, that's much more tragic than the very real dead bodies in *The End*. "To Kenny, everything was a fantasy," said Barry Took. "He didn't believe anything was real."

5.00am Business Breakfast (21613)

6.00 BBC Breakfast News (70302892)
9.05 Election Call with Liberal Democrat Malcolm Bruce (7001163)
10.00 Style Challenge (41231)
10.30 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (39811)
11.00 News (T) regional news and weather (429827)
11.05 The Really Useful Show (T) (9731618)
11.35 Change That (5155892)
12.00 News (T) regional news and weather (495095)
12.05pm Call My Bluff Bob Holness referees, with team captain Sandi Toksvig and Times columnist Alan Coren (5517724)
12.35 Good Living presented by Jane Asher (9348095)

1.00 News (T) and weather (79308)
1.30 Regional News (T) (5085279)
1.45 Neighbours (T) (2539655)
2.10 Snooker: World Championship Doug Dwyer introduces live coverage as second round gets under way in Sheffield (4143927)
3.30 Playdays (T) (6853705) 3.50 Postman Pat (6714811) 4.05 Felix the Cat (5852729) 4.20 Julia Jekyll and Harriet Hyde (T) (5838144) 4.35 Return to Jupiter (T) (7075095) 5.00 Newsround (T) (5728144) 5.10 No Sweat (T) (485665)

5.35 Neighbours (T) (T) (870637)
6.00 News (T) and weather (415)
6.30 Regional News (T) (130507)
6.55 PEB (T) (91060)
7.00 Watchdog Healthcheck Alice Beer and the team investigate whether living in the country makes for a healthier childhood, and Toyah Wilcox tries out alternative treatments for back pain (T) (4786)
7.30 EastEnders Sonia is forced to rethink her career plans after a run-in with the police. Pat claims down on Barry's shady business dealings (T) (279)

8.00 Animal Hospital Shauna Lowry reports on the progress of Blossom, as she trains to be a hearing dog for the deaf, and trainee nurse Sam Gill explains why she wants to work with animals (T) (3434)
8.30 Keeping Mum in Peggy's hands, a bag of oranges becomes a feared weapon at Uncle Wilfred's funeral (T) (2589)
9.00 News (T) regional news and weather (899434)
9.45 Election Broadcast: Labour (238279)

10.00 Mrs Merton in Las Vegas: Planes, Trains and Zimmerman Frances Carreras follows the exploits of the silver-haired pensioner and her 50 elderly acquaintances from the North West as they journey to the bright lights of Las Vegas (21892)
10.30 Question Time Labour Leader Tony Blair joins David Dimbleby to answer questions posed by members of the studio audience (T) (84144)
11.30 Lawman (1970) with Burt Lancaster, Robert Duvall and Lee J. Cobb. A sheriff tracks down a murderous gang to a hostile town. Directed by Michael Winner (T) (727540)
1.05am-1.10 Weather (6264274)

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SKY 1
8.00 Morning Glory (755560) 9.00 Pops and Kaithe Lee (52434) 10.00 Another World (11520) 11.00 Days of Our Lives (11520) 12.00 Oprah (85034) 1.00pm Gordon (62144) 2.00 Sally Jessy Raphael (7434) 3.00 Jimmy Fallon (755560) 4.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 5.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 6.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 7.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 8.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 9.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 10.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 11.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 12.00 The Tonight Show (755560) 1.00am The Tonight Show (755560) 1.10am The Tonight Show (755560) 1.20am The Tonight Show (755560) 1.30am The Tonight Show (755560) 1.40am The Tonight Show (755560) 1.50am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.00am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.10am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.20am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.30am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.40am The Tonight Show (755560) 2.50am The Tonight Show (755560) 3.00am The Tonight Show (755560) 3.10am The Tonight Show (755560) 3.20am The Tonight Show (755560) 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SNOKER 44

Higgins cuts a dash at the Crucible

SPORT

THURSDAY APRIL 24 1997

GOLF 49

Woods to the fore in thinking of Ballesteros



McManaman fuels slim cup hopes

Liverpool bank on a winger and a prayer

By DAVID MADDOCK

AT MELWOOD, the Liverpool training ground, a French journalist looked on with incredulity yesterday. "I have watched their session and they have only enjoyed themselves," he said, disbelievingly. His point was a basic one. How can Liverpool, after a week in which their defence was exposed as highly susceptible to crosses, not spend time trying to remedy such an obvious and debilitating flaw?

Contrast these two stories. When Ireland played in Macedonia recently, Roy Keane and Denis Irwin were whisked away straight after the game by their club. Manchester United, to a waiting private jet, which flew them back to Manchester. The next morning they were refreshed and ready for training. Jason McAteer, on the other hand, returned the next day with the national team, with stops in Nuremberg and Dublin. After a fitful sleep, he arrived in Liverpool at 5pm the next evening. His subsequent club match was not his best.

The point is that, while United do not necessarily possess the most talented players in England, the club is certainly the most professional.

Across the board, Manchester United have a massive advantage. They have three

full-time physiotherapists whereas Liverpool have one — and when he is away on first-team duty, injured players left behind must see a freelance. United have adopted the most high-tech training techniques from around the world; Liverpool, as the French journalist witnessed, still employ methods devised under Bill Shankly. And while Liverpool still look to the Shankly era for inspiration, United have consigned Sir Matt Busby's achievements to their museum.

As Liverpool enter their Cup Winners' Cup semi-final, second-leg tie against Paris Saint-Germain tonight, they would do well to reflect on such a contrast. They trail 3-0, and yet the competition now repre-

sents their only realistic hope of silverware this season. The summer is the time for reflection and possible recommitment, but what chance do Liverpool have tonight when they have not even worked on defending crosses this week?

If there is a lesson to be learnt from this season, it is that it is no longer viable to throw together a collection of talented players and ask them to go out and play. It may have worked for Shankly, Paisley, Dalglish even, but it will not work against the likes of Juventus, Ajax and Manchester United.

Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, must quickly update his club and turn it into an institution for the 21st century: yet the very fact that he has a talented, maverick group of players, whose inconsistency has cost him so dearly this season, could rescue a seemingly impossible situation this evening.

On occasions this season everything has come together and Liverpool have been irresistible. If Evans asks them to go out and play — really play — and they respond, then there is vague hope yet.

"It is very difficult, almost impossible, but you never know with our team at Anfield," Evans said. "We are capable of rescuing this tie, just as we were of throwing the game away in Paris. What we must have is a belief that we can still do it, still pull it off. If we don't believe, we can't achieve."

Evans may well choose to adopt an attacking line-up, with Berger joining Fowler and Collymore in the forward line, yet if they are to have any hope at all, then it is towards McManaman, a comparative veteran at 24, that Liverpool must look for inspiration.

He alone possesses the talent to destroy the powerful Parisians. He also has history on his side. McManaman is the sole survivor from the last occasion that Liverpool met French opposition in Europe, when they overturned a 2-0 deficit after visiting Auxerre in the UEFA Cup in the 1991-92 campaign to win 3-2 on aggregate.

"I remember it was a marvellous occasion, a magnificent atmosphere at Anfield," he said yesterday. "In the first leg they murdered us, much more convincingly than we were beaten in Paris, and that's why I believe we still have a chance."

In the other semi-final, Bobby Robson, the Barcelona coach, finds himself in a similar situation. What had been a season of huge promise has come down to a desperate final throw of the dice.

Barcelona visit Fiorentina, of Italy, after drawing 1-1 in the first leg, and Robson accepts that it is his side's only chance of salvaging something tangible this season.

"We are in a position when we will have to roll up our sleeves and really go for it," he said yesterday.



Yevgeny Kafelnikov grimaces during his second-round defeat by Christian Ruud at the Monte Carlo Open yesterday. Report, page 49

Global concern at diminished Zola power

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

IT WAS only a tweak of the hamstring, but its impact could be felt not only by Chelsea but also by the national teams of England and Italy. When Gianfranco Zola limped off in the final minute of his side's match against Wimbledon at Selhurst Park on Tuesday night, having played a typically vibrant role in Chelsea's 1-0 win, the portents were not good.

Little appears to faze Ruud Gullit, the Chelsea player-manager, but even he could muster no more than a guarded response. "I'm no medical expert and cannot say how long the injury will take to heal," he said. "It is a little muscle problem, a spasm rather than a pull. Maybe it is not too bad."

It is unlikely to exclude Zola from the FA Cup final against Middlesbrough at Wembley

on May 17. He will be handled with care and nursed gently back to health at Stamford Bridge, such is his value to Gullit's squad.

He may, however, miss Italy's group two World Cup qualifying match at home to Poland next Wednesday. Indirectly, that could help England, who play against Georgia at Wembley on the same night. A draw or victory for Poland, against a Zola-less Italy, would enhance England's chances of qualifying for the finals in France next year.

Zola flew out to join the Italy squad yesterday, which Gullit deemed a sensible option. "I don't think he will be able to play next week but it is a good thing he is still going to Italy," Gullit said. "He can have treatment every day from the national team's doctor."

Even if the worst happened, and Zola did not recover in

time for the Cup Final, Gullit retained an optimistic tone. "Although he gives us something extra, with his great skills, I know I have other players who can cover for him," he said. "Even in a cup final."

While Chelsea's victory bore little relevance to the key issues in the FA Cup Premier League, Southampton's

Final priorities 48
Ronald's \$30m deal 48

1-0 victory against Sunderland at Roker Park proved a huge fillip for the South Coast club. They leaptfrogged above Sunderland, into fifteenth place, and one more win could steer them clear of relegation.

Egil Olsenstad gave Southampton a 22nd-minute lead and although Sunderland laid siege to the visitors' goal in the

second half, they emerged empty-handed. "We played very well for the first half-hour and then had to hang on a bit," Graeme Souness, the Southampton manager, said. "Defending has been our big problem all season but, for a change, we did well in that department."

"Sunderland threw a lot of aerial stuff at us but we coped. When we had to tackle, we did. It was very pleasing all round. We've now got ten days to prepare for our next game, against Blackburn Rovers at home, and if we can win that, we should be safe."

Claus Lundekvam, the central defender, will miss the rest of the season after sustaining a shoulder injury but Matthew Le Tissier could return against Blackburn. "He's not yet match fit but he's not too far away," Souness said.

Defeat for Sunderland in-

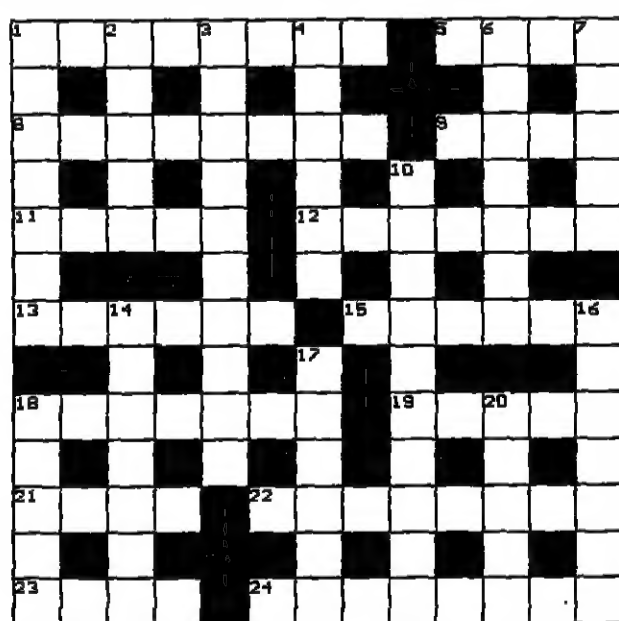
creases their plight, with the visit of Everton on May 3 — the last game at Roker Park before the club moves to a new ground — taking on huge importance. "I've never played in a Cup Final," Niall Quinn, the Sunderland striker, said. "but the Everton game will be the nearest thing to it."

Neither Sheffield Wednesday nor Aston Villa managed to improve their chances of qualifying for the UEFA Cup, with Wednesday losing 4-1 to Blackburn at Ewood Park and Villa held to a 0-0 draw by Leeds United at Elland Road. Blackburn's victory should have banished any lingering fears of relegation.

In the Nationwide League first division, Ipswich Town moved closer to securing a play-off place when they defeated Manchester City 1-0 at Portman Road. Steve Sedgley converting a 41st-minute penalty.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 1076 in association with
BRITISH MIDLAND



ACROSS

- 1 Pencil lead (8)
- 5 Thailand once (4)
- 8 In ridiculous fashion (8)
- 9 OT book, after Joel (4)
- 11 Slightly drunk (5)
- 12 (Programme) finish late (7)
- 13 Chinese snack; sounds like darken a little (5,3)
- 15 Open to all; sort of bar (6)
- 18 Narrow-minded (7)
- 19 Protective garment; type of stage (5)
- 21 Decisive, difficult point (4)
- 22 Not for the table; lie in bed (anag.) (8)
- 23 Killed; twist (4)

DOWN

- 24 Mentioned in paper (8)
- 1 Conceded, allowed (7)
- 2 Gk. fabulist (5)
- 3 Boisterous confusion (5-5)
- 4 Fat for soap, candles (6)
- 6 Sinful (7)
- 7 Stoneworker (5)
- 10 Initiative, energy (5-2-3-2)
- 14 Bad government (7)
- 16 Maintain, argue (7)
- 17 Literary family; Nelson's dukedom (6)
- 18 Anvil ear-bone (5)
- 20 Mechanical man (5)

British Midland The Airline for Europe

PRIZES: THE WINNER will receive a return ticket travelling Economy Class to anywhere on British Midland's domestic or international network.

THE RUNNER-UP will receive a return ticket to anywhere on British Midland's domestic network. British Midland offers an extensive range of destinations throughout the UK as well as Europe and has now added daily flights from Heathrow to Copenhagen, Oslo and Gothenburg. With over 1,500 flights a week to 18 European destinations British Midland is the Airline for Europe.

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Post your entry to Times Two Crossword, PO Box 6886, London E2 8SP to arrive by next Monday. The winners' names and solution will appear on Wednesday.

Name/Address

SOLUTION TO NO 1075

ACROSS: 6 Fortune 7 Lurid 9 Capon 10 Olympia 11 Saint George 14 Pride and joy 17 Attract 19 Yacht 21 Hence 22 Vinegar

DOWN: 1 Grip 2 Cut no ice 3 Devout 4 Flay 5 Property 6 Fact 8 Dragoon 11 Skirting 12 Enjoying 13 Splash 15 Native 16 Star 18 Apex 20 Cage

Chelsea forge Internet link

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

GUSTAVO POYET, the Uruguay international, is to move from the Spanish club, Real Zaragoza, to Chelsea at the end of the season, it was reported in Madrid yesterday. The Madrid sports daily newspaper, *Marca*, said that Poyet, 29, a midfielder, had agreed a four-year contract with the FA Cup finalists.

On the same day, Chelsea also revealed plans to sell match tickets over the Internet, following the example set by some theatres and cinemas which offer on-line booking facilities.

From 1998, supporters are expected to be able to purchase tickets from any computer

linked to the Internet and one idea is that users could call up an interactive map of the ground, complete with a seating plan, and click on a particular seat to reserve it.

Stuart Pearce, the Nottingham Forest caretaker manager, is to remain at the City Ground next season as a player — even if the club are relegated.

But the England defender is not revealing whether he will remain in the managerial hot seat on a permanent basis, although he admits he has made his mind up.

Pearce, who took over as caretaker boss in December until the end of the season,

faces the possibility of life in division one next season and defeat at Derby tonight would virtually seal Forest's fate.

"I will certainly be here as a player next season as I have a three-year contract to honour," said Pearce. "Unless I hear from anybody high up in the club in the meantime, I will still be here. I have also made my mind up as regards whether I want to remain as a manager but I am not ready to reveal what my thoughts are."

There has been constant speculation that general manager Dave Bassett would take over team affairs from Pearce in the summer if he opts to quit that role.

Sport mourns man for all seasons

Rob Hughes salutes the sublime talent of Denis Compton, who died yesterday

There is never relish in the passing of great sportsmen, yet it is somehow apposite that Denis Compton died yesterday, with the football and cricket seasons overlapping. For he played both, a master of that bygone breed of international footballer-cricketers, men who exchanged the summer for the winter game as if by slipping into a new coat.

Compton defined the seasons and though the cricket season began in earnest yesterday at half-mast and in silent respect to him, his legacy was of an era when a gifted man could walk from the crease to the playing field of football and represent his country at both. The seasons then were sacrosanct, now they consume one another. Besides, Gary Lineker, a talented opening batsman as well as a fine goalscorer, found that the choice had to be made in adolescence, that

one game or the other possessed and obsessed the lad before he was a man.

Compton became the first of our prominent sportsmen to employ an agent; now the sports are infested with them and it is agents, even more than parents, who procure the fortune for the budding sportsman.

Compton had something to say about this 20 years ago. "Cricket was my first love but with the financial incentives now in football it would have been extremely difficult for me to choose. It is wonderful to see footballers at last getting the wage their crowd-pulling talent deserves, but you hear so much talk about pressure and professionalism ... I loved those long summers and then changing to

winter to play football 50 times a season."

Even then, it took its toll. One talks nowadays of the overuse syndrome of athletes in all disciplines stricken down by wear and tear injuries. Compton was a forerunner of that as well; he played in the 1950 FA Cup Final for Arsenal, his last game of professional football before surgeons had to work on his crippled right knee.

He had charisma, a marvellous capacity to improvise his game and his life, and the last words he wrote for anyone were penned just days ago for the England and Wales Cricket Board Ashes guide. "There is nothing quite like an Ashes summer," Compton wrote. "It is a time when I particularly enjoy catching up with old

friends, and indeed old adversaries like Keith Miller." He urged everyone to enjoy this summer, but perhaps we should hope that never again will a man or woman so gifted have to second five years of their sporting prime to war, as Compton did.

Yet Compton, like his brother, Leslie, was a privileged individual. Privileged with his gift, privileged with his time, and privileged that his mother, having forbade him to join the Lord's groundstaff for only four months' work a year, acquiesced once Arsenal offered to pay him for the winter game. Such quality goes to the grave with the greatest all-rounder of them all.

Tributes, page 5
Leading article, page 23
Obituary, page 25
John Woodcock, page 50
Second career, page 50
County reports, pages 46, 47

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